The BRIDGE *of* DEE

G. M. FRASER

Books should be returned on or before the last date stamped below.

02. MAR 93

2 6 JAN 2016

ABERDEENSHIRE LIBRARIES

WITHDRAWN FROM LIBRARY

NORTH EA ERVICE
MEL JM

FRASER, G M

The Bridge of Dee: its history, its structural features and its

AaSi

122264

122264

To Archibald Dingwall M.D
from his friend.
John Collins Francis

January 15th 1914.
Many happy returns of the Day –

THE BRIDGE OF DEE

By the Same Author

THE GREEN AND ITS STORY

1904. Illustrated. Price 1s. Per Post 1s. 3d.

HISTORICAL ABERDEEN

1905. Illustrated. Price 3s. Per Post 3s. 4d.

Out of Print.

THE LONE SHIELING: OR THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE "CANADIAN BOAT SONG"

With other Literary and Historical Sketches, mainly Local, and Frontispiece

1908. Price 4s. Per Post 4s. 4d.

ABERDEEN STREET NAMES

Their History, Meaning, and Personal Associations

1911. Illustrated. Price 3s. 6d. Per Post 3s. 9d.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/bridgeofdee0000gmfr

The Bridge of Dee from the West

From a Pencil Drawing

The Bridge of Dee

ITS HISTORY, ITS STRUCTURAL FEATURES
AND ITS SCULPTURES

BY

G. M. FRASER

LIBRARIAN, PUBLIC LIBRARY, ABERDEEN

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

ABERDEEN: WILLIAM SMITH & SONS
THE BON-ACCORD PRESS
1913

AaSl
122264

ISBN: A2793

TO

THE DEAR MEMORY OF

MY WIFE

WHO LISTENED TO THE LAST CHAPTERS
OF THIS BOOK
AND WHOSE SYMPATHY AND KNOWLEDGE AND WISE
JUDGMENT WERE A CONSTANT INSPIRATION IN
ALL WORK OF THIS KIND FOR ABERDEEN

WILLIAM SMITH & SONS
THE BON-ACCORD PRESS
ABERDEEN

INTRODUCTORY

THE purpose of this book is twofold—to add to the knowledge and interest of readers in the historical possessions of this city and neighbourhood, and secondly, to bring nearer, if possible, the time when a grounding in Local History will form part of the work in our ordinary day schools. On this latter point a word or two may be necessary.

It has been suggested that the teaching of Local History might tend to make people narrower and more parochial in their outlook. But this could only be said by anyone who has given no serious study to the question, for, in point of fact, the tendency, where such teaching has been tried experimentally, is precisely the opposite way.

To begin with, it is not intended that Local History should be the only history teaching in the schools, but only the groundwork of history teaching, on which wider history could be more intelligently and more effectively taught than at present. The children will be more easily and

pleasantly drawn from the things they actually see and know to the more abstract affairs of general history. Then it is impossible to teach Local History at all properly without being brought at every other point into touch with similar interests all over the country, and of all times. The features of the Bridge of Dee, for example, could not be placed adequately before a class of young people without their attention being drawn to similar features in other ancient bridges in Scotland and England, and so to mediæval structures of the kind on the Continent. Few people know that we have in the little Ruthrieston Bridge, so remarkably narrow, and with parapets only a few inches high, a fine example of an ancient pack-horse bridge, but once you point this out to children the young imagination not only grasps the significance of the low parapets at once, but roves in search of other pack-horse bridges, for which they must travel a very long way from Aberdeen. The same with other existing historical objects in our midst, which have no significance for the untaught, but which could so easily be made interesting in themselves, and the means of carrying the minds of our young

people into the wider, most fascinating interests in our national history.

Then, particularly, such teaching would provide the children with a larger and more wholesome interest in life. We have about us a whole world of delightful interests of this kind which ordinary school lessons seldom or never touch. Not a schoolboy or schoolgirl in a thousand in Aberdeen —or in any other town—could tell you the name of the patron saint of their own town, or the reason why he was made patron, or when he ceased to be of interest in the town's affairs. They know nothing of the story, or even the correct representation of such a familiar thing as the town's coat of arms, for they have never been drawn by the pleasant and suggestive way of the commonest armorial bearings into the romance of national or European life. How many of them know that in Aberdeen, as in other towns, we minted our own money, and that if they like they can go and see actual Aberdeen coins within ten minutes' walk of where the coins were minted in Exchequer Row in King David's time? Children are intensely interested in these things when the facts—and

examples—are set before them, and we have still such an abundance of historical scenes and objects and records in and about this city that Aberdeen children might easily be enabled to look back on their school days as a time of the greatest charm and delight.

For children will carry the inspiration of such teaching wherever they go throughout life. When they have gained an intelligent interest in the features of the Market Cross, and know something of the remarkable history of which it has been a centre through centuries, they will not only find that an enlightening and delightful possession, but they will become interested—not with the interest of antiquaries at all, but with a wholesome, enlightened general interest—in the Cross and all that it stands for in every town and village they may ever see. So with our ancient bridges, our feudal castles, and historic houses, ancient wells, street names, churches, Roman camps, stone circles, charters, historical records, and every other means by which the culture of former days may be explained. Every parish has them, and all of them ought to be cared for and used, as they well might

be, to prepare the minds of our young people for a fuller and far more interesting mature life than has been the case in Scotland up till now.

In preparing this volume on the Bridge of Dee I have received most willing help on many points in the inquiry which it is impossible to acknowledge here. I should like, however, to acknowledge assistance from Mr. P. J. Anderson, LL.B., University Librarian, who read the proofs of the chapter dealing with the coats of arms, and made helpful suggestions, and Mr. James Georgeson, M.A., Classical Master, High School for Girls, whose helpful interest was specially valuable in dealing with the puzzling inscription on pp. 113-4. I wish to acknowledge, too, for the first time, the interest in all these studies of Mr. William Smith, the Bon-Accord Press. His own work in the line of the historical interests of the city is well known, and his friendly encouragement and help have been most valuable throughout.

G. M. Fraser.

99, Hamilton Place,
Aberdeen.

CONTENTS

Chapter I

Page

The Historic Bridges of Aberdeen—Problem of the Earliest Bridge of Dee—An Ancient Bequest from Kincorth—Projected Bridge at Craiglug—The Ferries and Fords of Dee—The Bishop of Aberdeen and his relations with the town—Elphinstone's real intention in projecting the Bridge of Dee—The purpose of Gavin Dunbar—Elphinstone's actual share in the undertaking, ... 1

Chapter II

Gavin Dunbar as Bishop—His interest in the Bridge of Dee scheme—Architect and Master-Mason appointed—The construction works—Damage by a spate—Some features of the Bridge—The structure and endowment offered to the town—A hesitating community—The arrangement completed, ... 14

Chapter III

Watching at the Bridge for the Plague—The Bridge Chapel—Curious dispute with Gordon of Abergeldie — The Statue of the Virgin and its story—The Port on the Bridge of Dee—A diligent Dean of Guild—Grotesques on the Bridge—The Bridge Funds and their use—Building of the Bow Bridge and the Bridge over Ruthrieston Burn, ... 28

Chapter IV

The Town Council neglecting the Bridge—Its use in War—The rebel Lords and James VI.—The Covenanting Troubles—Battle of the Bridge of Dee—Ballad of Bonny John Seton—The Killiecrankie Highlanders—The Port and its Coats of Arms—The Bridge in ruinous state—The Town Council and its Reconstruction, ... 45

CHAPTER V *Page*

Prospective reconstruction of the Bridge — An Overseer appointed—Southern Architects consulted—The Town Council and Restoration works—A Master Mason—The preliminary wages bill—Restoration works in progress, 1718-1723—Some curious payments—The Master-Mason pensioned—Memorial tablets, ... 61

CHAPTER VI

The Bridge of Dee Road—The "Causey Mounth"—The ancient line of the Road—The Town Council and the maintenance of the Highway—An application to the Privy Council —The Causey Port or Gateway—Its precise site—Removal of the Causey Port and the Port on the Bridge of Dee—Some famous Travellers on the Causey Mounth—The new South Road, ... 76

CHAPTER VII

The Road from the Bridge of Dee to the City—Ruthrieston Bridge—The Provost and his Coat of Arms—Taylor's Scheme of a Riverside Road—Abercrombie's Scheme of Holburn—The widening of the Bridge in 1841-2—Proposals of Archibald Simpson and John Smith—A higher architectural view—The work accomplished—A problem of low parapets, ... 89

CHAPTER VIII

The Coats of Arms and Inscriptions—Unique Example of the Arms of Scotland—A much mis-copied Inscription—Provost Blaikie's Arms—Features of the Aberdeen Arms—Tablets of the reparation works—Elphinstone and Gavin Dunbar, ... 107

CHAPTER IX

Coats of Arms, *continued*—King James's Arms and early Unicorns—The Regent Albany—A fine Elphinstone example —Dunbar's Arms as reflecting his character—Defects in dimensions of the Bridge—Ancient "crow-steps" in the Parapet —Remains of old road levels—The old Sun-dial, ... 126

ILLUSTRATIONS

THE BRIDGE FROM THE WEST *(Frontispiece)*

BISHOP WILLIAM ELPHINSTONE

BISHOP GAVIN DUNBAR

THE BRIDGE IN 1822

THE BRIDGE FROM THE EAST

"OUR LADY OF GOOD SUCCESS"

THE BRIDGE FROM THE NORTH-EAST

THE "ABERDEEN PIER"

THE SOUTH-EAST ABUTMENT

THE OLDEST COATS OF ARMS

The Story of the Bridge of Dee

CHAPTER I

The Historic Bridges of Aberdeen—Problem of the Earliest Bridge of Dee—An Ancient Bequest from Kincorth—Projected Bridge at Craiglug—The Ferries and Fords of Dee—The Bishop of Aberdeen and his relations with the town—Elphinstone's real intention in projecting the Bridge of Dee—The purpose of Gavin Dunbar—Elphinstone's actual share in the undertaking.

ABERDEEN is unique among Scottish towns in having among its ancient monuments two historic, beautiful bridges. The Bridge of Balgownie, a stately and familiar object to the townsfolk during the last six hundred years, has many historical and literary associations, and its interest is the greater from its most unusual and striking ecclesiastical design. Its continuance in an efficient state is assured from the jealous interest with which it is watched over by Aberdonians, and from the happy circumstance that a rich fund exists for the special purpose of keeping this ancient bridge in repair.*

*The ecclesiastical Gothic of this bridge seems a daring style for a Churchman to adopt in the 14th century, unless we keep

The Bridge of Dee has a shorter history than this old Bridge of Don, but a history much fuller in historical and personal incidents. In some respects, as we shall see, the story of the Bridge of Dee associates very closely with the story of Aberdeen itself since the beginning of the sixteenth century. The bridge was not provided by the town, for in those days civic efficiency such as this would imply was unknown in this part of the country, and the bridge stands as perhaps the latest witness in the north-east of Scotland to the practical statesmanship that was often manifest in the Pre-Reformation Church.

The present Bridge of Dee dates from 1520-1527, and usually it is supposed to be the first bridge built over the Dee at Aberdeen. That seems a very late date for the first bridge leading to what was the most important town in the northern half of Scotland, and it will be advisable to state some reasons for the view that there was an earlier bridge there, although clearly not in the years immediately preceding the present structure.

In the first place, the convenience of a bridge over the Dee was well known long before the

in view that bridge-building was often in a sense a religious duty. It seems to have been adopted for such a use nowhere else in Scotland. We have a similar case in the Crowland Bridge, near Peterborough. The fund for the maintenance of the Bridge of Balgownie amounts at present to £26,523.

sixteenth century. There was a bridge in the beginning of the thirteenth century over the Dee at Kincardine O'Neil, constructed at the instance of the father of Alan the Door-ward, Justiciary of Scotland.*

Then there was a bridge probably at Durris, half-way between Kincardine O'Neil and Aberdeen. Many notable visitors to Aberdeen in the early centuries crossed the river there. The most illustrious of them, Edward I. of England, in his only visit to the town, passed northward by Montrose, Glenbervie, and doubtless Cowie, then struck westward among the hills to the Manor of Durris, Friday, 13th July, 1296, where he stayed overnight. From Durris, on Saturday, he passed to Aberdeen, where he stayed for five days, and received the homage of the burghers.†

We had also the Bridge of Balgownie, already mentioned, for two centuries before the present Bridge of Dee, a standing proof to the Aberdonians of the usefulness of such a structure. And the traffic over the bridge of Don would be nothing to

*Charter granted by Alan, A.D. 1233, in Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis, II., 268. Alan afterwards possessed the lands of Banchory-Devenick, adjacent to the south end of the Bridge of Dee.

†Record of Edward's journey, Historical Documents—Scotland, II., 29. Also in Gough's Itinerary of King Edward the First, II., 281.

the traffic over the Dee, for in this direction lay the greater part of the town's external business, and the town's principal means of coming into contact with the great world of the south.

A note of a more definite kind is struck by the editors of the Register of the Abbey of Arbroath, whose lands touched the very spot we are considering. Say Cosmo Innes and Chalmers, his co-editor—

> We find a bridge existing over the Esk at Brechin . . . in the early part of the 13th century. In that age, we had a bridge over the Tay at Perth; bridges over the Esks at Brechin and Marykirk; a bridge over the Dee at Kincardine O'Neill, probably another at Durris, one near Aberdeen, and one at the mouth of Glenmuick.*

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to find the separate authority for this statement (beyond what is to be mentioned presently), but Cosmo Innes was not a person to speak without book, and his remark adds weight to the strong presumption of an earlier bridge on the site of the present Bridge of Dee.

But the most curious piece of evidence as to an earlier bridge is contained in our earliest ecclesiastical register. The property of Kincorth, near the south end of the bridge, was owned in the fourteenth century by John Crab, son of a clever Flemish engineer of the same name, who

* Liber S. Thome de Aberbrothoc, I. (Preface) xxviii.

rendered valuable service to Scotland in the siege of Berwick in the early part of that century. John Crab, like his father, was a notable citizen of Aberdeen, one of the wealthiest, and a representative of the town to the Scots Parliament, in which capacity he would have personal experience of the convenience of the ancient bridges which we know lay even then between Aberdeen and Edinburgh. In 1384 John Crab made out a contract in favour of his son Paul Crab, under which he provided that, in certain events, from his lands at Kincorth—

> The said Paul, my son, will receive and have for his own use fifty pounds sterling; and other fifty pounds he will hold in deposit for the use and maintenance of the Bridge of (the water of) Dee. Also, I give and grant to the said Paul, my son, the forty shillings annually due to me from the Barony of Fyndon for the use, necessity, and maintenance of the Causey Mounth* and the Bridge of Dee.†

Now, it is not absolutely certain from this that the bridge here spoken of was actually in existence, or was only a project, but taking everything into account the likelihood is that it really stood—a timber structure, possibly, on the site of the present bridge. The road leading to the Bridge of Dee, for centuries known as the Causey Mounth, is described in this instrument in the familiar way

* The Causey Mounth, the highway from Cowie over the Grampians to Aberdeen.

† Rendered from Registrum Epis. Aberd., II., 286.

that comes of long usage; and so until some fortunate chance throws more certain information in our way, we are fairly entitled to hold that John Crab referred to an existing bridge at that convenient spot a century and a half before Bishop Elphinstone projected the structure which we know to-day.

Passing from that, however, we know that, in point of fact, there was no bridge in at least the half century preceding the present structure. The want of it was much felt, and moved the authorities of the town (distinctly behind southern Scottish towns in civic enterprise), to project a bridge in 1459 at Craiglug, on the precise site selected by Samuel Brown in 1830 for the present Wellington Suspension Bridge. As was the practice then, they chose a churchman to superintend their undertaking—John Livingston, vicar of Inverugy, himself a burgher of Aberdeen, with property in the Castlegate, and interested accordingly in the common weal. They contracted with Livingston that he should be "Maister and governour of the said [bridge] work," they to pay annually £20 for ten years towards the expense from the burgh funds.* But their courage failed them at the last, for some reason, and for sixty years more Aberdonians and their visitors had to be content with the Fords of Dee, one ford at

* Extracts from the Council Register (Sp. Club), I., 22.

Hilldowntree and the other nearly opposite the Ruthrieston Burn, and with the ferry boats, of which there were two—the Upper Ferry at Ferryhill, near Craiglug, and the Lower Ferry at St. Fotin's, or Foty, the district now known by the corrupt name of Footdee.*

It was not until Bishop William Elphinstone had completed his great undertakings at Old Aberdeen—the building of King's College, the completion of the Cathedral, the erection of the Snow Church as the Parish Church, the making of Old Aberdeen into a burgh of barony, with other minor things—that he turned his attention to improving the means of access between his diocese and the south.

In this matter we are not to suppose that in providing the Bridge of Dee Bishop Elphinstone, or his successor Bishop Dunbar, had any direct intention of conferring benefit on the town of Aberdeen. There is no evidence of that. The Bishop of Aberdeen, although he bore the territorial title from the twelfth century, exercised no jurisdiction within the burgh except in a most limited sense in relation to St. Nicholas Church. There seems, indeed, to have been practically no

* In 1495, when James IV. erected Torry into a Burgh of Barony, the ferry-boat at Foty was the usual means of crossing the river. In 1732 no fewer than eighteen ferry boats were plying on the Dee between Aberdeen and Braemar.

intercourse between the town of Aberdeen and the bishop. St. Nicholas, in theory, was a vicarage, of which the bishop was rector, but the title was nominal and the discharge of the duties practically unknown, while the vicar seems to have been non-resident throughout.* In all the movements for the rebuilding and reparation of the church the bishop had no part, and only on one occasion, in 1477, does the bishop appear to have joined in helping to defray the cost of such works. It was left to the Town Council to take all steps necessary for the maintenance of the fabric, furnishings, utensils, and so on, even for the maintenance of religious services. At one period, in the time of Gavin Dunbar, so slack had things become, that services in the Church had actually come to a standstill, yet no concern was shown by the bishop. There seems to have been a studied attitude of aloofness on both sides. At one time it came to a definite rupture, and the Town Council set up what seems to have been the earliest "boycott," as it would now be termed, of which we have any record, against the bishop-elect. In 1480, Bishop Thomas Spens, who seems to have been on more cordial terms with the town than any others of the Episcopal line, died at Edinburgh.

* In one recorded instance, in 1498, the bishop was present and took part in the service in St. Nicholas.

Bishop William Elphinstone

The projector of the Bridge. Gathered materials, and set apart funds, but never began the work. From the original painting in King's College.

His successor was Robert Blakatar, the immediate predecessor of Elphinstone, but before he had been fully confirmed as bishop, Blakatar gave such offence to the Aberdonians that they formally cut all communications with him.

> 6th November, 1481. — The Alderman (Provost), Consel, and communitie of the burgh of Abirdene . . . . has deliverit and ordinyt because that Robert, elect confirmat (bishop) of Abirdon, has schavine him unkindly (shown himself unfriendly) in the restriction of the second teind of Abirdene quhilk is gevine by his predecessor, beschop Thomas Spens, quhome god assolze, to the biging of the quer of Abirdene, the foresaid Alderman, Consel, and communitie, has decretit, deliverit, and ordinyit that nane nychtbur (no burgess) duelland within the said burgh sal mak na servias (do no service) to the said Robert, elect, na yet to nane of his factoris on his behalf. Inde quhat ever he be at dois in contrar of this act sal tyne his fredome and his tak sall waik, and incontinent be disponit.*

It shows little apprehension on the part of the town of the bishop's powers of reprisal that they should openly enact that whoever should do him service would not only lose their freedom in the burgh, but have their "tak" declared vacant, and be summarily disposed of. But it is quite in the line of the relations between the parties throughout. No doubt occasions arose on which communications passed between the town and the bishop, but these

* Council Register, Vol. VI., p. 702. Quoted in Chartulary of St. Nicholas, II., 335.

seem to have been always of a more or less formal character. It was a strange relationship, keeping in view that the Reformation was still in the future, and it is well enough illustrated in an incident of the year 1530, in the time of Bishop Dunbar, stated in the Council Register—

> 1st March, 1530.—The said day, William Lyoun, balze [baillie] to my lord [bishop] of Aberdene, asket lycens at William Rolland, ane of the balzeis of this burcht [burgh] to hang ane theif quhilk was convikit in my lord of Abirdene's court; quhilk lycens the said William Rolland, grantit, protestand that it suld nocht hurt the townis prevalegis in na sort.*

So far as we know, the sole intention of Bishop Elphinstone when he projected the Bridge of Dee was to provide a suitable means of entry to his diocese and to the central seat of his authority. Likely enough, as he was Lord Privy Seal of the Kingdom, he would have in view the general improvement of means of communication in the north, but that would be a minor consideration. The same idea would be in Gavin Dunbar's mind, even when he endowed the bridge with lands for its upkeep, and, no doubt, this was fully understood by the townspeople when, as we shall see presently, they even looked askance at the substantial endowment which the bishop offered them. But it was inevitable that the town should benefit in

* Extracts from Council Register (Sp. Club), I., 446.

various ways from the structure, for an adequate bridge is not only, as Cosmo Innes says, a test of civilisation, it is also a very definite means to that end.

Doubts have often been expressed as to the share precisely that Bishop Elphinstone had in connection with the bridge, but there seems no great difficulty about the matter. He conceived the idea of the bridge, he provided funds for carrying out the work, although it is not possible to say what part he had in the arrangement for endowing the bridge; and he made preparations for beginning, but never actually began, the work of construction. Hector Boece is an historian to be cited with the greatest caution on many points, but he is of the highest authority in matters of actual occurrence in the later local experience of Bishop Elphinstone, for as Principal of King's College in Elphinstone's time, he was the bishop's close associate, and knew. In his Life of Elphinstone, published 1522, a few years after the bishop's death (in his Lives of the Bishops of Mortlach and Aberdeen), Boece states the facts with regard to the Bridge of Dee with precision—

> Lastly, our William [the bishop] undertook to build the bridge over the river Dee, a work of piety, and very needful for the convenience of the public. In a short time he prepared many stones and wood, and as much cement as appeared to be sufficient for carrying out the

greater part of the work, and trustworthy labourers were summond for the erection of the foundations of the piers.*

But Bishop Elphinstone's work in connection with the Bridge of Dee was suddenly interrupted. These preparations were going on in 1513 when James IV. plunged the country into the unhappy English war that ended disastrously for Scotland on the field of Flodden. The whole business of the country suffered in the result. If skilled workmen had been already brought north for the building of the Bridge of Dee, they were sent away again—some, at least, of those who would have been engaged would have to answer the summons of the King to that ill-fated gathering on the Burgh Muir of Edinburgh prior to the march into England. Bishop Elphinstone suffered as if he had accompanied the King to the field of battle. He shared in the national grief at the loss of the flower of Scottish manhood, but he appears to have borne himself, as far as his strength would go, with that high and firm spirit that possessed the nation in that time of supreme national misfortune. Although an old man of eighty, in the year after Flodden he left his diocese for Edinburgh to take part in the

* Robert Scott Mylne's The Master-Masons to the Crown of Scotland, p. 37. Dr James Moir, in his translation of the passage, renders it that the bishop collected "an immense quantity of stones and timber as well as rubble stones."

deliberations of Parliament. But the journey was beyond his strength, and within a few days of his arrival in Edinburgh he died, 25th October, 1514. The provision of the Bridge of Dee he left as an inheritance to his successor, and it has been to the advantage of the generations since that one of his successors was faithful to the trust.

CHAPTER II

Gavin Dunbar as Bishop—His interest in the Bridge of Dee scheme—Architect and Master-Mason appointed—The construction works—Damage by a spate—Some features of the Bridge—The structure and endowment offered to the town—A hesitating community—The arrangement completed.

OF the actual building of the Bridge of Dee it is not possible to learn much. After the death of Bishop Elphinstone, 1514, nothing was done for some years. His immediate successor in the episcopate, Alexander Gordon, did nothing with regard to the bridge, and we can easily understand why.

In the first place, Gordon, who was a kinsman of the powerful Earl of Huntly, and was nominated bishop by the canons of Aberdeen at Huntly's instigation, had to compete for his appointment, and had little opportunity, and probably less desire, to take up a minor affair of this kind. It so happened that Ogilvie, the Scots ambassador to Louis XII. of France, was also nominated Bishop of Aberdeen by Albany, now Regent of Scotland since the death of James IV. at Flodden. And a third Bishop-elect was in the field in the person of Robert

Forman, Dean of Glasgow, who was actually declared Bishop by the Pope, Leo the Tenth. In due time the two other claimants withdrew, and with the consent of Albany, and by authority of the Pope, Alexander Gordon became the acknowledged bishop.*

Then there was the other sufficient reason that no sooner was Bishop Gordon established in the episcopal seat, than he fell into a sickness that troubled him till his death, which took place within three years. Hector Boece tells how affairs were neglected during the bishop's illness, and more particularly he explains how arrangements were deferred for the erection of the Bridge of Dee.

> Mention was frequently made, during Gordon's life, of Bishop William's legacies for building a bridge over the Dee, for the completion of the College, and of other buildings in its neighbourhood which had been already begun. Proceedings were taken against those whom, while he was alive, Bishop William had appointed his trustees, along with others into whose hands at his death the property had passed ;† but no decision was come to owing to the evil nature of the times. For these reasons the latter, who were the parties chiefly interested, seeing that no place was being selected [for the bridge], and that the public could be induced neither by the goodness of the cause, nor by the latest gifts of Bishop William, to apply his legacies to the purposes destined by him,

* Boece's Lives of the Bishops of Aberdeen, with Dr. Moir's translation, pp. 112 *et seq.*

† Bishop Elphinstone left a fortune of £10,000.

resolved, meanwhile, lest they should have to submit to still greater inconveniences, to defer the work to some happier time, if ever such should come, and to allow the whole question of carrying out his wishes meantime to lapse.*

With the advent of Bishop Gavin Dunbar, 1518, a new era dawned—the last bright period in the history of the Romish Church in this part of the country before its final extinction as the ecclesiastical system of Scotland.

The highest expectations were formed of the new prelate, who came to Aberdeen recommended alike by noble lineage and by a distinguished reputation for scholarship and a faithful and consistent Christian character. We are told that as soon as he entered on office he visited Aberdeen—(which probably means Old Aberdeen, where his Cathedral and episcopal residence were situated). The citizens (again of Old Aberdeen), went out to meet him, bells were rung, fifes and trumpets were played, he was met by a procession of monks, canons, and priests arrayed in costly and sacred vestments; then followed the rector of the College, with a great procession of learned men.† We are not told by this

* Hector Boece, Lives of the Bishops, p. 114. It has to be kept in view that Boece was not only closely associated with Bishop Elphinstone, but was probably one of the trustees nominated to carry out his wishes after his death.

† Ibid., p. 115.

Bishop Gavin Dunbar

The builder of the Bridge. His Coat of Arms is the most frequent piece of sculpture on the structure. From the original painting in King's College.

narrator, who was present, and who quotes even the laudatory speeches made on the occasion, that the Provost and Baillies of Aberdeen were there, or any of the burgesses, and it is quite evident that they were not. None the less, Bishop Dunbar was acclaimed as the needed man in the diocese, and he soon gave evidence of his paternal concern in matters that affected diocesan well-being.

> Four days after [his arrival] he examined the materials which Bishop William had prepared for the erection of the Bridge over the Dee. He found also the buildings in the neighbourhood of the College, which he had begun, still incomplete. A strong desire seized him to build the bridge, and complete Bishop Elphinstone's other works. For the better execution of these designs, he wished Alexander Galloway, to whom as his chief and most faithful friend Bishop William had entrusted all his fortunes, to take charge of the bishop's legacies and employ them in the way destined in his will.*

In nothing did Gavin Dunbar more display his wise judgment than in the selection of Rev. Alexander Galloway as his chief architectural adviser. Galloway, who was parson of Kinkell, the interesting little church, now in ruins, near Keith-hall, had already served Bishop Elphinstone in the same capacity, and he left his mark on all the great architectural works of the neighbourhood—King's College, the Cathedral, the Snow Church, the Bridge of Dee, and afterwards Greyfriars Church in Broad Street. It was no unusual thing

* Boece's Lives of the Bishops, p. 122.

then to have a clever Churchman in superintendence of building schemes of this kind. When Elphinstone began to take steps for the building of the Bridge of Dee, he was probably well aware of what was being done by his colleague, Bishop Brown of Dunkeld, who had just begun a similar bridge over the Tay, near his Cathedral, and had placed in charge of the work Canon Alexander Mylne, afterwards Abbot of Cambuskenneth.*

But Gavin Dunbar took another very practical step. An ecclesiastical architect, or oversman, was all very well, but a practical, skilful master-mason was also essential. So the bishop brought north Thomas Franche, mason, son of John Franche, master-mason to James IV., himself afterwards master-mason to James V., and the most eminent in a long family line noted in Scottish architecture.

Actual building operations at the bridge were begun probably about 1520. The first definite information we get of what was in progress is in September, 1522, by which date operations were going on with the arches, for it happened then that the "centres," or wooden frames for the arches, were carried away in a spate. There was trouble about the restoring of them, and we are told by an entry in the Council Register—and a valuable and significant entry it is—that

* See The Master Masons of Scotland, pp. 17 *et seq.*

Maister Alexander Galloway, person of Kinkell, exponit to the provest and bailzeis quhow Gelis Monro and his complecis tuk one hand to uphave the centrice (centres) of the brig to the samyn, quhilk the spat haid brocht doune incontinent, quhow soune he mycht gudly, for ane France crown of gold promest to him be the said parsone ; and that, in the said Gelis defalt, the said sentrice ar broking, spylt, and away to the sea haid, in great skayth and damag of that noble wark [the bridge].*

This is the only glimpse we get of actual construction work until the bridge was finished in 1527. From our knowledge of the materials of it, indeed, and from its construction and finish, we can enter a little into the life of the proceedings. It had a good deal of timber in the framework, and was built partly of freestone, partly of granite, though mainly of the former, just as the Cathedral had been, and is to this day.† Then in its design it presented certain features that were unusual in Scottish bridges at that time. It was a bridge of seven semi-circular arches. The roadway and arches were level, which was not customary, and above each pier was a recess from the roadway, which had the advantage for foot-passengers of adding width and safety to the narrow road. The

* Extracts from the Council Register (Spald. Club), I., 105.

† It is probably unnecessary to point out that although the main fabric of the St. Machar Cathedral is of granite (the only granite cathedral in the country) the two Western towers are of freestone.

undersides of the arches were beautifully ribbed, quite a new feature in the historical bridges of Scotland. Other ancient bridges of Scotland had the arches plain—the old Bridge at Stirling, Devorgilla's Bridge over the Nith at Dumfries, the Old Bridge of Ayr, and our own Bridge of Balgownie. The nearest ribbed bridge of this rank to the Bridge of Dee in the old days was Twizel Bridge over the Till near Flodden. The ribbing no doubt was a constructional device, but it is interesting too, as giving some lightness of character to this otherwise massive and masculine structure.*

Another peculiar feature of the bridge was the large number of coats of arms and commemorative inscriptions carved upon it. In this respect the Bridge of Dee is still quite exceptional among the historic bridges of the country. The arms of Scotland were represented, the arms of Albany, the regent, of Bishop Elphinstone, who conceived the idea of the bridge, and of Bishop Gavin Dunbar,

* Ribbed bridges of the Elizabethan period are not uncommon in England, but are more common in France. It has been pointed out to me that there are certain other bridges with ribbed arches in Scotland—Dairsie Bridge, Fifeshire, East Linton Bridge, Haddington, etc., but these are of a different quality, and are all more recent than the Bridge of Dee. Twizel Bridge at the present day is a beautifully ribbed structure. It is of one fine arch only, but it has the same number of ribs (five), and practically the same width of roadway as the Bridge of Dee before the widening of 1842.

who built it. Bishop Dunbar's coat of arms is frequent, but the arms of the intermediate bishop, Alexander Gordon (who, as we have seen, took no interest in the undertaking) are conspicuously absent.

With other coats of arms—all to be dealt with in more detail presently—the arms of the town of Aberdeen are there, but it is not beyond doubt, at least, whether they were there from the beginning. The lines of the carved freestone seem sharp to have faced the weather for four hundred years, and it is rather more than possible, keeping everything in view, that this coat of arms was placed there by the townsfolk themselves when carrying out works on the bridge fully two centuries later.

In 1527 the bridge was finished. We wonder who crossed it first. In the previous year, April, 1526, James V. visited Aberdeen for the first time. He was then only fourteen years of age, and although in that year he ceased to be in law a minor, he was still in the close guardianship of the jealous and crafty nobles. All the usual preparations were made in Aberdeen for the reception of the King's grace, his nobles and his council, but we are not told whether it was deemed safe for the royal cavalcade to enter the town by the still unfinished bridge. Probably not. But the King could scarcely pass the river without casting an eye on the stately new structure that was to mean so

much in the public convenience of this isolated corner of his kingdom.

In any case, the great work was completed in the early part of 1527, and Bishop Dunbar, through Alexander Hay, parson of Turriff, his Commissary General, made offer of the bridge to the town of Aberdeen, along with the lands of Ardlar in the parish of Clatt, as an endowment for the maintenance of the bridge in all time coming. For some reason the Aberdonians were not specially eager to undertake the charge. They thanked the bishop, indeed, "all in ane voce," for "the gret plesour and proffat doune to tham in the biging of the brig of Dee, and of the gret offeris promittit to tham be his lordschip for the uphald of the samyn," but they would only give a final answer on a certain subsequent date as to whether they would accept the charge or not.*

All this was in the month of April, 1527. On 3rd June, they gave a definite but qualified reply. They quite acknowledged the generosity of the Bishop's work.

> My Lord (they began) we zour servandis, provest, bailzeis, consull, and comunitie of Abirdene, hes ressanit

* Council Register, XII., 137. A number of minutes on the point are quoted in Extracts from the Council Register, Orig. Spalding Club, I., pp. 116-119, but certain of them are in the wrong order and wrongly dated. The first, dated 1st April, 1527, should be second, and dated 27th April; the second (without date) should be first, under 1st April.

zour l(ordschipis) guid mynd, exponit to vs be zour Commissar, Maister Alexander Hay, persoun of Turref, touching of zour l(ordschipis) brig of Dee, fundit, bigit, and endit one zour grit, hie, and exhorbitand expensis, for the perpetuall comon weill of the cuntra and of us, of the quhilkis guid deid and mynd God eternall revard zou for we ma nocht.*

Upon which they acknowledged the bishop's desire to infeft them and their successors with the lands of Ardlar to be held in feu for the maintenance of the structure. And they make the naïve request that if it could be managed they would prefer that his lordship infeft them with some of his lands lying nearer the town, or exchange with others having lands nearer the town, Ruthrieston for example, "or ony other sik lik," which would be more profitable and pleasant for the carrying out of the end in view. This suggestion was not given effect to, and accordingly, as a minority of burgesses dissented from the proposed arrangement, the final settlement did not take place for two years more.

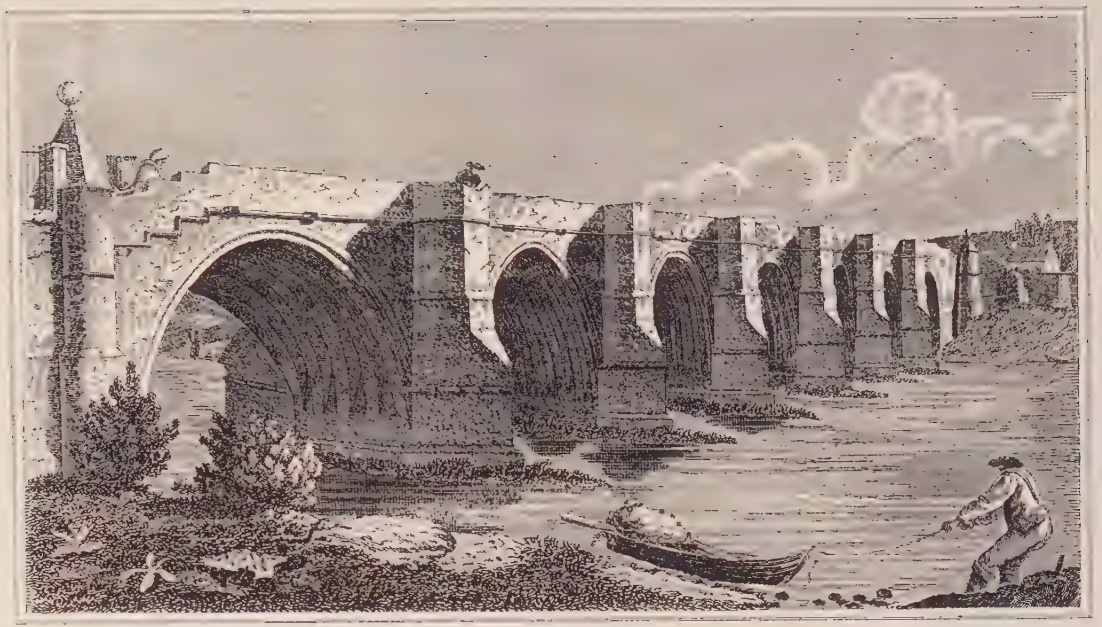
At length, on 10th December, 1529, all parties having come to a right frame of mind, the townsfolk formally agreed to undertake the charge of the new bridge with the endowment of Ardlar. They undertook to intromit with the funds in no way except in reparation and maintenance of the bridge,

* Ibid., XII., 174-5. Quoted also in Extracts, as above, I., p. 117.

and the better to enable the moneys to be properly conserved they resolved to have "ane kyst" made, with four locks and four keys to contain the rents of Ardlar, whereof the Provost was to have one key, the merchants another, the Master of Kirk Work the third, and the Deacons of the Crafts the fourth.*

It must have been a relief to the bishop to reach an end of this question. Four days after the burgesses had finally agreed to accept the trust, that is on 14th December, 1529, the bishop granted the formal charter of Ardlar to the Provost, Baillies, Council, and community of Aberdeen, and the document was witnessed by, among others, George, Earl of Huntly, and Hector Boece himself, the most interesting personage, after the bishop, in all the burghal and ecclesiastical group. On that same day, 14th December, the townsfolk also met and entered into a formal Obligation to use the endowment as the bishop desired for the upholding

* The lands of Ardlar (or Ardlair), Clatt, remained in the hands of the town till 1590, when they were sold to John Leslie of Balquhain for 4,000 merks. The money had not been paid in 1593, as on 2nd June of that year the Council desyrit and ordanit their representative to receive the money, but it does not appear that the transaction was completed till 1596. With the funds the Town Council afterwards bought the property of Caprastoun (now Hilton), near Aberdeen, and still later the lands of Gilcomston for behoof of the Bridge of Dee charge.



The Bridge in 1822

Showing the old crow-stepping on parapet and string-course. *From a drawing by* G. SMITH. 1822.

and maintenance of the Bridge of Dee, described in the instrument as

> ane substantious bryg of fyn aislar stane and lym, with pillaris, pendis, doubill brasis, battaling and cawseis, contenand sax pillaris, twa land stalis, and seven bollis clein hewin, and laid with brandaris of ayk, bulwark of ayk and stane about ye said bryg necessar baith to watter and land with passagis convenient of saxteen fwit of breid with the said battaling ower the watter and ryver of Dee rynnand on the southt syd of our said burcht quhar nan was of befoir above the Kyngis fwird as the commond gait gangis fra our said Burcht to the cawsay of the montht.

This was not yet the end of the proceedings. Three days later, 17th December, 1529, the burghers again met to receive the representatives of the bishop, Robert Elphinstone, parson of Kincardine O'Neil, and Alexander Galloway, parson of Kinkell.

> And therefter, the said Maister Alexander Galloway, parsoun of Kynkell, delyverit and ower-gaif the said brig frelie, with the pertinente . . . . . togidder with the attentik chartour and precept of seising (sasine) of the saidis landis of Ardlar, with their pertinente, seilit and subscrivit athentiklie, as is afor writin, and ressavit at the handis of the said Alexander Rutherford the athentik band and obligations of the said provest, bailzeis, counsall, and communitie, seilit and subscrivit in dew forme, as said is, for the perpetuall mending, repairing, ouphalding, and biging of new of the said brig, als oft as neid beis, as said is.

This finally disposed of what was then a troublesome question, although why it should have been so troublesome is not very apparent now. In any case, although the Council have not always kept to the

strict letter of the bond—to intromit with the Bridge of Dee Fund for no other purpose than the maintenance of that structure—they have done so with a widened outlook, and from that day to this the preservation of the bridge has been a definite and particular charge of the community.*

In all these proceedings two men especially appear to have done their work with marked fidelity and success.

One of these was Alexander Galloway, parson of Kinkell, who was probably the designer of the bridge, and who had the general oversight of the works in behalf of the bishop. He commended

* The documents relative to these original arrangements with regard to the maintenance of the bridge, are a little difficult to place, but the following, I think, are the correct order and situation—(1) The minute of the burgesses' meeting (Baillie Court, etc.), of 10th December, 1529, is contained in the Council Register, XII., pp. 728-9, quoted in Extracts from the Burgh Register (Sp. Club), I., 126-7. (2) Note of the bishop's formal grant of Ardlar, 14th December, 1529—Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis, I., 393. (3) The Town's Obligation of same date—Council Register, vol. XII., of date, and Registrum Epis. Aberd., I., 395. (4) Minute of the receipt of the bishop's charter by the town, and handing over of the Obligation, 17th December, 1529—Council Register, vol. XII. of date, quoted in Extracts, I., 127; also in Kennedy's Annals, I., 416-7. (5) The charter was confirmed, among many others, by James VI. at Holyrood, 12th May, 1587, and the copy in the Charter Room is fully reproduced with translation in Mr. P. J. Anderson's Charters and other Writs, p. 81. See also Register of the Great Seal, 1580-1593, p. 406.

himself much to the townsfolk, and when, in this very year, 1529, they resolved to fortify the town with encircling wall and fosse, they employed Galloway to make an inspection and advise them with regard to the work. They duly approved of his report, affixing their common seal to it in token of ratification, and although they never carried it into effect they seemed perfectly satisfied that Galloway's scheme was the right thing to be done.

The other person was Thomas Franche, master-mason, the skilled craftsman, who, under Alexander Galloway as architect, had the preparing of the stones and wood, and the actual building of the bridge. He remained in Aberdeen for some little time after the bridge was finished, for in 1530 he was still here, and at that time suffered the loss of his son. He had been engaged by the bishop on St Machar Cathedral, and his son was buried there, near Bishop Dunbar's aisle, where the partly effaced inscription on the wall may still be seen.* Very soon thereafter, Thomas Franche returned to the south country, to the service of the King, and he and his company of skilled masons are found leaving their mark in more than one sense on the palace and chapel of Linlithgow.

* Heir lyis Tomas, the Son of Tomas Franch, Master Mason of Brig of Dee and this isle—1530. Mylne's Master-Masons to the Crown of Scotland, p. 39. The inscription at St Machar is now practically indecipherable.

CHAPTER III

Watching at the Bridge for the Plague—The Bridge Chapel —Curious dispute with Gordon of Abergeldie—The Statue of the Virgin and its story—The Port on the Bridge of Dee—A diligent Dean of Guild—Grotesques on the Bridge—The Bridge Funds and their use—Building of the Bow Bridge and the Bridge over Ruthrieston Burn.

WE are not to suppose, although the process of transferring the Bridge of Dee and its endowment to the townsfolk took over two years to complete, that the bridge was not serving its purpose during that time. All the indications are that it was in full daily use from 1527. The first precise intimation of its use, however, occurs in October, 1529, just before the transference arrangements were settled. The Aberdonians at that time, as often happened, were in fear of being visited by the plague, which was then ravaging the south country. They enacted that two burghers should pass to the Bridge of Dee every day and remain there from six in the morning till six at night so long as the mysterious and dreaded pestilence continued, and "to lat nane owre the said brig without testimoniall quhat place thai come

fra."* It was not in this way that the town was to be kept free of trouble, as the burghers often found, but a watch on the bridge was the ready and present means of isolation that a primitive folk would most readily resort to.†

The bridge was not long in the care of the town before officials were appointed with the special charge of it. On 7th October, 1530,

> The said day, the provost and counsall above wrytin has chosin Andrew Cullan, Duncan Mar, and Waltir Cullan Maisters of the brig wark of Dee, thai being sourne the grait aitht in iugement to reule and gyd the samyn to the utilitie and profyt thereof and for this commound weill.‡

There was, indeed, some public pride in the structure. We shall see that on one occasion the citizens chided the Council for neglecting the bridge, "the most profitable monument" in the north country. There is something of the same spirit in the poetical works of the time—particularly in Arthur Johnston, the great Latin poet of the north of Scotland; and we have it, naturally, in the descriptions of Boece, put into verse by

*Extracts from Council Register (Sp. Club), I., 125.

†The health conditions of the town of Aberdeen were at this time wretchedly poor. In the official Accounts of 1453 one shilling is noted as paid "for dichting of the Nedyr Kirkgate." In 1612 there is a payment of five shillings Scots "for ane schoil (shovel) to serve the toune in clenging the calsay." The first scavenger was appointed in 1479.

‡Council Register, Vol., XIII., f. 5.

Alexander Garden, or Gardyne, the literary Aberdeen advocate, who published his poems early in the seventeenth century, and, incidentally, gave us some particulars of the appearance of the Bridge of Dee in his own day. Garden, paraphrasing Boece, tells how Bishop Elphinstone intended to "re-edifie" the choir of the Cathedral, but

> That worthy interpryse,
> It onlie was begun,
> Bot throughe his other great adois,
> And death, was never doone.

Then he proceeds—

> And yit a wark als great,
> And necessar much more
> Unto his awne, his countrie's good,
> And bothe thair greater gloire.
> Annon thareafter he
> Resolv'd, and first intends
> That evrie age and eye that views,
> Ameirs yit and commends.
> This was the Brige o'er Dea,
> Which ev're man may mark,
> Ane neidfull, most expensive, great,
> A good and gallant wark;
> Knit close with quadrat stones,
> Free all, incis'd and shorne,
> Of these the pend, with arches sevene
> Supported is and borne;
> Sharp poynted butresses
> Be bothe, that braks and byds
> The powar of the winter speats,
> And strengthe of simmer tyds:
> Above it's beautifeit
> With ports and prickets four,

And all alongs it rayled is,
  And battaild to look o'er.
A great and goodlie work,
  Whiche, whow long't stands and stayes
It ay sall mater ministrat
  Unto the Author's praise.*

When the bridge was built the bishop erected in connection with it a little wayside chapel, that travellers, after the fashion of the times, might make their devotions ere starting on their journey, or after safely completing it.† The chapel stood at the north east corner of the bridge—probably its site is about marked by the present unsightly enclosure there, at the first buttress from the water's edge. It seems to have been built closely up against the bridge so that it might be entered easily from the roadway, and also serve as an extra pier in a time of flood. Its position was the cause of a

* For complete work see Garden's A Theatre of Scottish Worthies and the Lyf, Doings, and Deathe of William Elphinstone, Bishop of Aberdeen. Privately printed for the Hunterian Club, 1878. Part will be found in the excellent sketch of the Bridge of Dee by Mr. Bulloch in Mr. Henderson's History of Banchory-Devenick.

† There was originally a chapel at the Bridge of Balgownie, dedicated to the Virgin, which was under the charge—says Kennedy—of the Magistrates of Aberdeen. In 1443, the chaplain, "Sir" William Ettles, was admitted a burgess free of payment, for repairing the bridge. Annals, I., 422. Examples of bridges with chapels from those times are still to be found in England—at Wakefield and Rotherham, Yorkshire, Bradford-on Avon, Wilts, etc.

curious dispute that arose soon after its completion between the Town Council and Gordon of Abergeldie, who had the fishings there. Abergeldie contended that the chapel was an obstacle in the way of the working of the fishings, and made a formal appeal to the Baillie Court.

> Penult, February, 1530.—James Cheyne, procurator to the lard of Abirgeldie, requirit David Andersoun and Maister Androwe Tulydef, bailzeis, sittand in jugement, to mak ane esy gait and passage betwix the Brig of Dee and chapell of the samyn, quhair throw thai may eselye (easily) without impediment, wyrk and lawbour thair watteris, protestand alwayis quhat damage or skaith thai sustenit thairthrow suld cum on the toune and nocht on thame, and that in name and behalf of his master, the lard of Abirgildy, quhilk send with him servand to that same effect.*

Abergeldie failed to get the desired facilities, whereupon he took the law in his own hand and "cast down" the bulwark of the new bridge. But the burghs were now emerging from the dominance of the great proprietors. The Council sent the Provost, Gilbert Menzies, and another to Edinburgh to pursue Abergeldie before the Committee of Estates, a needful course in an offence against the community. There is no record of how the affair took end, but the masterful laird had doubtless to make amends, wondering, we may well imagine, at the spirit of the burghers and the growing degeneracy of the times.

* Extracts from Council Register (Sp. Club), I., 129.

The chapel was dedicated to the Virgin, and like St. Nicholas Church was under the guardianship of the town. We read that "Sir" William Ray, "umquhyle chaplane to our ladye chappell of the Brig of Dee," on 9th January, 1530

> deliverit in jugement to the bailzeis and counsaill ane chaleis (chalice) of silver, ane ymage of silver of our lady, baicht (both) ouir guilt; thre naipkingis ane broodin and twa quhyt; ane altar towell, togedder with the key of the offerand stok, to be kepit to the utilitie and profitte of the said chappell.*

These would be all the utensils of the little chapel, given up by the late chaplain on demitting office, but the strange thing is we never hear of their being used again. Had the old religion become so completely a spent force in the neighbourhood that this short trial showed there was no need of the chapel at the Bridge of Dee? The Reformation was already fully in prospect. The rumour of it, and the actual operations of the Lutherans, were so paralysing the decaying religious observances of Aberdeen that Gavin Dunbar had appealed to the national authorities for help to check the growth of the heresy.† It is more than likely that "Sir" William Ray, the earliest

*Extracts from Council Register, I., 129.

†In 1525, in response to Gavin Dunbar's appeal, the King sent down letters to the Sheriff of Aberdeen urging steps to be taken to stamp out the "dampnable opinzeons of herecy" that were abroad in the diocese.

priest that we read of in connection with this bridge chapel, found little to do there, and probably never had a successor.*

The chapel contained an ornate wooden statue of the Virgin, known as Our Lady of Good Success, doubtless a product of the Low Countries, which had a legendary share in assisting Gavin Dunbar to fix the proper site for the Bridge of Dee. Alexander Kennedy, said to have been an Aberdonian, a Franciscan monk, in the Monastery of St. Augustine, Brussels, 19th May, 1636, made the following statement—"I, the undersigned [Alexander Kennedy], bear witness, and take my oath, that I heard from my ancestors the following facts:—That the statue of the Blessed Mary the Virgin, called 'of Good Success,' and placed in the monastery of the Augustine Fathers at Brussels, gave audible indications to the Most Reverend Father, Gavin Dunbar, Catholic Bishop of Aberdeen, whilst he was praying concerning the spot where he should lay the foundations of the bridge over the rapid river Dee, and pointed out to

* "Sir" was then a customary designation of ungraduated clerics. "Schir" Andro Wricht, in 1474, was Master of the Kirk Work of St. Nicholas, and "Schir" Henry Harvey was chaplain of St. Michael's Chapel there. Further afield, we find Sir Henry Kinghorn, Vicar of Newtyle, 1497, and Sir John Cuke, Vicar of Dairsie. It was the same elsewhere. These men were often in charge of the sang schools connected with the Churches.

him on both sides the points between which he afterwards built the magnificent bridge of seven arches, that is to this day to be seen."* About the time of the Reformation the statue disappeared. According to Father Blakhal it was conveyed by an Ostend merchant from Aberdeen to Ostend by sea, and on its arrival at Ostend was the means of winning a battle against the Hollanders.† It is still in the church of Notre Dame de Finistère, Brussels, and the esteem in which it is held there is shown by the following letter of recent date—

BRUXELLES *ce* 30 *août*, 1912.

MON CHER MONSIEUR—La statue de N. D. du Bon Succès qui se trouvait à Aberdeen est honorée chez nous dans une jolie chapelle. Elle est l'objet d'une grande dévotion et a été visitée cette année, 1912, par Mgneur. l'evêque d'Aberdeen. J'aurai l'honneur de vous envoyer tout ce qui concerne la statue miraculeuse. Je vous prie, Monsieur le bibliothécaire, d'agréer l'expression de mes sentiments les plus distingués.

JOS. PROAST,
Curé de N. D. du Finistère.‡

*See *Aberdeen Journal*, 18th August, 1887, where the statement, said to have been found "in a rare old folio," is given.

†Blakhal's Breiffe Narration (Sp. Club), p. 43. A photograph of the statue is given in the Ruthrieston United Free Church Bazaar Book, 1902, p. 29.

‡BRUSSELS, 30*th August*, 1912.

MY DEAR SIR—The statue of Our Lady of Good Success, which was in Aberdeen, is honoured here in a beautiful chapel. It is the object of great devotion, and has been

The Chapel of Our Lady certainly did not survive the Reformation, but it is a curious circumstance, typical of the grave tenacity with which we cling often to obsolete forms, that the patronage of the chapel continued to be ascribed to the proprietors of Ruthrieston for at least a hundred years after it ceased to exist. In March, 1658, Oliver Cromwell, through his representatives in Edinburgh, confirmed a contract of sale of "the sunny half of the town and lands of Ruthriestoune," with half the mill, mill lands, and half the fishings on the Dee adjacent to the property "with the advocation, donation, and right of patronage of the chaplainry near the Bridge of Dee."*

Another familiar feature of the bridge from early days was the port, or gateway, across the south end. It was at first a timber structure, built in the summer of 1545. At that date the burghers were again on the watch against undesirable

visited this year, 1912, by Msgr. the Bishop of Aberdeen. It will be a pleasure to send you particulars with regard to the statue of the miracle. With sincere regards, etc.

JOS. PROAST,
Notre Dame du Finistère.

*Register of the Great Seal, X., 278. Kennedy (Annals, I., 418), says the patronage of the chapel belonged to the Bishop of Aberdeen "as proprietor of the lands of Ruthrieston on which the chapel was built." It is a curious statement; I have not been able to find it true.

strangers. This time it was the fear of their old enemies of England that was upon them, and with good reason. Although in February of that year the Scots had routed the forces of Henry VIII. in the Battle of Ancrum Moor, the tables were completely turned before the summer was over, for the famous second expedition of Hertford by that time was in full victorious blast, carrying fire and sword through all the Scottish Border country. The Abbeys of Jedburgh, Melrose, Dryburgh, and Kelso were then finally plundered and left in ruins, and it was the proud boast of the "full declaration" made to the English king on the return of the expedition that they had destroyed nearly 200 towns (farm-towns evidently), towers, parish churches, and other such edifices, and "in villages, 243." The fame of so much misery might well reach the Aberdonians, and so we find them, in July, setting special watch at the Block-house, Links, and Haven nightly, fully alive to the "sea danger" as well as to possible visitations by land.

It was to meet the latter possibility that they resolved to construct a port on the Bridge of Dee.

27th July, 1545—The said day, the bailzeis, with avise and consent of the consale and nychtbouris (burgesses) present for the time, conducit and feit Sanderis Ratray their wache nychtlie, and he to find five personis nychtlie with him . . . . . and als thai ordanit that thair be ane port maid incontinent with all diligence on the south end of the Brig of Dee with tymmer, to be fast lokit in the

nycht, and weill keipit on day lycht . . . . . and in the mentyme quhill the said port be bigit, that there be tua trew honest fellowis keipand the same bayth day and nycht, and ilk ane of thame to have for thair lawbouris 12d. one the day and nycht.*

In a very short time thereafter the port was completed and felt to be a means of safety for the town. It was repeatedly repaired, sometimes entirely renewed, in the course of the century, but always evidently of timber work, till 1597, when the town enjoyed the blessing of an extraordinarily zealous Dean of Guild. The burning of witches in that year was held to be a crowning glory of his reign, but he turned aside from that work to build what seems to have been a stone port on the Bridge of Dee, and these and other things accomplished drew from his admiring colleagues the supreme acknowledgement of a grant of money.

21st September, 1597—The quhilk day, the provest, baillies, and counsall, considdering that William Dun, dean of gild, hes diligentlie and cairfullie dischargit him of his office of deanrie of gild, and hes painfullie travellit theirin to the advancing of the commoun gude, and besydes this, his extraordinarlie takin panis on the birning of the gryt numer of witches brint this year, and on the four pirattis (burnt on the Heading Hill) and bigging of the port on the brig of Dee . . . . . theirfor in recompence of his extraordinarie panis, and in satisfaction theirof . . . . . to incurage utheris to travell als diligentlie in the discharge of thair office, grantit and assignit to him the soume of fourtie-sevin pundis thrie s.

* Extracts from the Council Registers (Sp. Club), I., 221.

four d. awand be him of the rest of his compt, of the unlaws (fines) of the personis convict for slaying of blakfische, and dischargit him theirof be thir presentis for ever.*

The public (doubtless also the private) life of the town must have been at an appallingly low ebb when things of this kind could be done, and distinction claimed for them in a public way. The stone port of the bridge, so provided, passed through many vicissitudes in the course of its long history. It was repeatedly repaired, and it had its coats of arms carved upon it, and coloured—or illuminat—after the ancient manner, and it survived till near the end of the eighteenth century when it was cleared away to give space for the new and more expansive necessities of the times.

There was one other feature of the bridge as completed in 1527 that has only recently been re-discovered. This was a series of carved human heads along both sides of the bridge, one projecting above the apex of the "cut-water" on each pier. We can easily see whence came the inspiration for these uncouth sculptures. The bishop, operating in ecclesiastical and spiritual things, provided the bridge and the adjoining chapel. The townsfolk,

*Extracts from Council Register (Sp. Club), II., 115. The detailed outlays in connection with the witch-burnings—a horrible episode in the history of the town—are set out in the Miscellany of the Spalding Club, Vol., V., reproduced also in Gavin Turreff's Antiquarian Gleanings, 1859 and 1871.

interested in external practical affairs, neglected the chapel, but added the port to the bridge as we have seen. These sculptured figures of the piers, of the nature of grotesques, pertain clearly to the Churchman's sphere of interest. They were not freakish. They would have a meaning in Dunbar's time, but it is as impossible to explain that symbolical meaning now as to explain the corresponding grotesques on the great ecclesiastical structures of the Middle Ages.

At the present day these rough sculptures are mean-looking, and are weathered nearly out of sight. Along the east side of the bridge, facing the sea and the cutting blasts that come from that quarter, these projecting sandstone blocks are much worn down, and any appearance of a human face there is quite indistinguishable. Along the west side (to which the widening operations of 1842 were confined, and where all the external features of the bridge were carefully replaced) the blocks are not so much worn as on the east side, but only in one case is the facial appearance easy to be made out with the naked eye.

When the bridge came finally into the charge of the town it appears to have been looked after for a time with care. In 1531 the Council appointed Alexander Monypeny, mason, to make any repairs that were necessary on the bridge and chapel, and

The Bridge from the East

Looking towards Banchory-Devenick where the old "Causey Mounth" road crosses the Grampians. *Photo by* W. J. Watt.

agreed to pay him therfor "five merkis usual money of Scotland of yeirlye pensioun for all the dais of the said Alexander's lyfe."* Other occasional glimpses we get of the anxiety of the authorities to preserve the bridge. In 1540, Gilbert Malisone, Master of Bridge Works, was charged to pass to the Bridge of Dee, at a time of spate, and inspect it, and he was to take as many workmen with him as he thought necessary "to prowyd remeid for the saifty of the said bryg fra the dangeir of the spayt appearand to be, and to eschew the saymn, and pay the said servandis for their labouris."† In 1546 the Council again ordained an official inspection by the Master of Works who was to "tak twa or thrie of the counsale with him, and vesy (inspect) with ane masoun and wrycht all faltis of the said brig," and with all diligence to repair the same.‡ It seems to have been so throughout most part of the sixteenth century, and the diligence was proper and to be expected in respect that the funds available from the bishop's endowment were now accumulating in the Council's hands.

With regard to these funds, it was not very long before the Council began to "intromit" with

* Extracts from the Council Register (Sp. Club), I., 141.

†Ibid., I., 168.

‡Ibid., I., 240. The fact that a "wrycht" was to be of the party indicates how largely timber entered into the construction of the bridge originally. That was a usual feature of the times.

them for other purposes than the reparation of the bridge. In 1542—Gavin Dunbar having passed away ten years before—the Council resolved to build "ane commoun hailis" upon a piece of waste ground in the Rotten Row (behind the present Town House), and to pay the cost out of the rents of Ardlar. Any profits arising, however, were to be duly credited to the Bridge of Dee Fund. But a little later they went further, and laid hands on the rents of Ardlar to pay part of the expenses of a levy of citizens sent to join the national forces on the Border "for resisting of our auld ennimies of Ingland." In the same cause, and in organising defence of the town, they took twelve-score merks of the rents of Ardlar to pay for it. But they had some scruples, and in recording the resolution they felt it needful to add that "becauss the said money pertenis to the ouphald of the bryg of Dee and the toune may nocht dispone of the samen, nor na pairt thereof, by (besides) the use and wark of the said bryg," therefore they appropriated the rents of a half-net fishing of Don, amounting to twelve merks yearly, to the upholding of the bridge in recompense. But qualms of conscience did not always trouble—as when, in the same year, they took of the rents of Ardlar to pay the expenses of Provost Thomas Menzies in attending a national convention at Dundee.*

* Extracts from the Council Register., I., 184, 194, 197, 199.

But other expenses, apart from the bridge, were more akin to the object of the trust. Such was the building in 1541 of "ane bryg of tre (timber) our the pot burne, on this side the brig of Dee"—that is, over the Ruthrieston Burn, evidently the first bridge on that part of the highway from the Bridge of Dee to the town. Such also was the building of the Bow Bridge, 1556, at the town end of the same highway to carry the highway over the Denburn to the Green. It was the first stone and lime bridge at that familiar entry to the town, and considering that they had no part of the cost to provide, the authorities had no great credit in the structure.

> 2nd January, 1556—The said day, the haill toun being convenit within the tolbuitht, thocht neidfull and expedient to big ane brig upon the Den burne, at the south-wast entre of the toune as thai cum thairto fra the brig of Dee; and ordanis Maister Robert Lumisden, maister of wark of the brig of Dee to big the said brig of tua bowis (two arches), sufficiently with stane and lyme, with the reddiest of the money that he hes of the mailis (rents) of Ardlar, and to by stanis, lyme, and all materialls neidfull thereto; and quhat he debursis on the biging of the said brig to be thankfully allowit to him in his nixt compt.*

In this period the Reformation was fully accomplished in Aberdeen. It was over these bridges presumably that the band of Mearns men

*Extracts from Council Register (Sp. Club), I., 294. There was a previous timber bridge there, also known as a Boll, or Bow Brig.

crowded, January, 1560, who destroyed and looted the religious houses in the town, "under colour and pretence"—said the Catholic Provost—"of godlie reformatioune." It was a far more picturesque company that rode over these bridges into Aberdeeen two years later, in August, 1562. It was Queen Mary, accompanied by Murray and her Privy Council, and all that gallant company that escorted the young Queen in her famous progress to the north of Scotland. So imposing was the royal array that the burghers became alarmed at the prospect, and while the Queen was still between Edzell and Aberdeen, 26th August, they held a meeting, as larger expense was likely to be incurred by the royal visit than they had anticipated, to devise how the necessary additional funds could be raised. The difficulty was safely overcome. The Queen was met by the burghers, and although it would have been beyond them to make her happy in the wretched circumstances of the time, they gave her of their kindliest cheer till she passed furth of their narrow streets on her further journey to the north.

CHAPTER IV

The Town Council neglecting the Bridge—Its use in War—The rebel Lords and James VI.—The Covenanting Troubles—Battle of the Bridge of Dee—Ballad of Bonny John Seton—The Killiecrankie Highlanders—The Port and its Coats of Arms—The Bridge in ruinous state—The Town Council and its Reconstruction.

THE sixteenth century saw the Bridge of Dee built, with its chapel and its timber port, the latter of which was repeatedly renewed. In the seventeenth century the history of the bridge was uneventful except for one or two notable episodes.

It must be said that the authorities in those days, although in possession of funds for the upkeep of the bridge, do not appear to have discharged their duty in caring for the structure with any conspicuous zeal. The occasional small payments entered in the town's accounts for repairs to the bridge hardly afford indication of continuous watchfulness. On one occasion, 1591, a summons was actually served on the Town Council at the instance of certain citizens who alleged that the

"provest and counsall hes sufferit, and daylie suffers our bridge of Dee, the most profitable monument within the north pairt of our realme, to decay, and the water bushing (rushing ?) and runing throw the hewin work of the pillars thairof, to the utter wrack alsweill of all our liedges as of our said burgh, the skaithe, damnage, and expenssis thairof, befoir the samyn be sufficientlie repairit, extending to fyve hundredth merkis."* This looks like serious neglect on the part of the Council. And it rather tends to the same conclusion that in the beginning of the eighteenth century the bridge had fallen into such a ruinous state that outside specialist advice was called for, and a large expenditure was entailed in purely reparation works.†

Although situated about two miles from Aberdeen when built, the bridge soon came to be looked upon as really the main south entry to the town. It was there, as we have seen, that watch was kept when the pestilence was feared, or personal enemies of the community. Gibbets were put up there on which prohibited visitors might be suspended ; and in times of war, when Aberdeen became so frequently the scene of conflict, the Bridge of Dee was sometimes the key of the situation.

* Henderson's History of Banchory Devenick, 129.

† It was found necessary, as we shall see, to bring architects from the south to advise on the repairs.

Before the sixteenth century was out, an occasion of this kind arose. The Popish lords, Huntly, Errol, and Crawford, in revolt against the King—James VI.—reached the Bridge of Dee in their northward march, closely followed by the royal forces. There seemed every likelihood of a conflict, but hearing that the king in person was in the field, the army of the confederate lords lost heart and fled, to gather again later for the disaster of Glenlivat.

It was in the time of the "Troubles," however, in the middle of the seventeenth century, that the operations of national warfare broke so frequently against the Bridge of Dee.

The chief occasion was in 1639, on the opening of the great Civil War. Before that great struggle was known in other parts of the country it had opened in the neighbourhood of Aberdeen, and it is singular, as Hill Burton pointed out that—discounting the "Trot o' Turriff"—the Bridge of Dee, in this remote north-east corner of Scotland, should have been the scene of the first battle in the war.

It was the Covenanting times. Aberdeen had already suffered from the national contention—"No burghe trublit but thay," says Spalding pathetically. The Aberdonians had not been slack in fortifying the town for the King's party. They, "upoun the

first day of Marche (1639), fell to wark and keist deip ditches fra the Gallowget port doun the north syde of the toune touardis the castellhill, and about the hill. And upone the south syde of the toun thay rasit up tymber sconces anent the loche claid with daillis, quhairby the tounes muskiteiris micht saiflie stand and molest the enemy. Thay had the lyke sconces at the Gallowget Port upone the hill. Thay had ellevin peice of ordinance which wes plantit most commodiouslie upon the toune streitis, ilk peice haveing ane tymber sconss set up for soldiouris to defend the samen. And thus ar thay bussie, man and woman, making grat expenssis to hold thame out, who wold nocht be holden out for them, as ye may sie."* But not only were these of no avail. Time after time the town had the Covenanting army quartered in it—"who complanit thay war not maid welcum," which was very likely—and it was subjected to repeated and oppressive fines to prevent its being plundered.†

*Spalding's Memorialls of the Trubles, I., 142. At the order of Montrose, soon after, these ditches had to be summarily filled up "to the effect his army micht pass and repass without impediment."

†Numerous entries occur in the town's accounts at this time that tell of the hardships in this way experienced by the burghers. Thus—Discharge, 1638—Item, gevin to the Erles Mareshall and Montrose thair sojours at command of the magistrattis and adwyse of the haill toune, to saiff the toune from plundering at that tyme, 6666 lib., 12*s.* 4*d.* Treasurer's Accounts.

As the weeks went on the Aberdonians, still loyal to the king, were much heartened by the arrival of the royalist troops under the youthful Lord Aboyne, son of the Marquis of Huntly, the great man of the north country. "Mony barronis and gentilmen, heiring of the Lord of Oboyne's cuming with assureans of men and money from the King, cam in to Abirdein most glaidlie to him; yea, and mony covenanteris proveit turn-taillis throw plane feir, and cam most willinglie into him, and maid up ane trym company about 2000 men."*

With this trim company Aboyne marched to Kintore where he made a demonstration, and compelled the signing of the band of allegiance. They were no more gentle persuaders than the forces of the Covenant, although Spalding, whose sympathies are entirely with them, admits it apologetically—"They plunderit meit and drink, and maid good fyres; and quhair they wantet peats, brak down beddis and burdes in honest menis houssis to be fyre, and fed thair horses with corne and strae, that day and nicht, but [without] doing ony more wrong."†

In due time Aboyne, having raised 200 more men in Aberdeen, marched over the Bridge of Dee towards Dunnottar where the Earl Marischal and the Covenanting forces lay. The Earl Marischal,

*Spalding I., 206. †Ibid., I., 208.

hearing of his coming, started out to meet him, and planting his cannon on the high ground near Muchalls in face of the approaching enemy, so frightened the Highlandmen that formed part of Aboyne's force, who had never seen such weapons, that they incontinently turned tail and fled homewards, up through the Deeside hills, not omitting to steal the cattle of the country people as they went along.*

Then came the Battle of the Bridge of Dee.

> Upone this samen Mononday [17th June, 1639] the Errl Marchall seing the Lord Oboynes returning back again to Abirdein, as ye have hard, he gatheris his forces, wreittis to the Errl of Montroiss, and the said Mononday cums fordward to Tullohill [the high ground on the south side of the bridge] quhair he incampis whill mor freindis cam to him, sic as the said Errl of Montroiss and Errl of Kinghorne, who cam indeid.†

But young Aboyne was full of spirit. On Tuesday, 18th June, he "gois to array his soldiouris and sic as he gat also out of both Abirdeins, and resolvis to stop thair cuming to the toun by keiping of the Brig of Dee." They carried to the bridge four brass pieces—"quhilk

*Spalding, I., 208. It would accentuate the delights of these thefts that the tenants who suffered were the tenants of Earl Marischal in the lands of Strachan. But Highland caterans, plundering "nolt," seldom boggled about a march dyke.

†Ibid., I., 209. The site of the camp on the Tullohill is still known as the Covenanters' Faulds.

did little skaith." Lieutenant Crowner Johnston, his second in command, manned the bridge, "fortefeit the port upone the south end of the same, and causit cloiss up the samen stronglie with thik faill to hold out the schot of the [Covenanters'] cartow. He had about ane hundred brave musketteirs, quhairof fyftie wes still in service be turnes."*

The forces under Montrose and Earl Marischal were about 2000 foot and 300 horse. "The Lord of Aboyne was of no less number, and moir of braver horssmen, lying about the Brig of Die this Tuysday, but few fut men." The Earl Marischal sets his forces in array and advances from Tullohill to the bridge. They began to shoot their cartow, a cannon "quhilk," says Spalding, "was very fearfull," having a bullet of 20 pound weight. "But courageous Johnston manfullie defendit the same with brave musketeirs that cam out of both Abirdeins, who gave fyre so abundantie upon thair enemeis' musketeirs that they were of them praisit and admired for thair brave service. Thus, this haill day, thay on the ane side persewing the Brig with cannon and muscat; and on the uther syde thay ar defending with muscat and thair four brassin peices (whiche did littil service) yit no skaith on our syde except ane tounis man callit Johne Forbes wes pitifullie slayne, and William Gordoun, of Gordounis

*Spalding, I., 209.

Mills, rakleslie schot in the foot, both antecovenanteris. Thus night cam, both pairties left af, set thair watches, attending the cuming of the morning." *

The next day was more disastrous. The Aberdeen men were good soldiers, but indifferent strategists. They blundered first in leaving the bridge, about 50 muskets, to convey the body of their slain townsman, John Forbes, to the town for burial. Worst of all, they—or their commander—foolishly allowed themselves to be deceived by the wily Covenanter Lords, who drew a party of 200 horse up the river side, as if to cross the river higher up. This, Spalding mournfully remarks, was "over haistellie beleivit be Oboyne."

> Quhairupon he rydis up the water syde to meit thir horsmen at thair cuming throw the water, and leaves the brig foolishlie with brave Johnstoun and about 50 muskiteirs onlie, who wonderfullie stood out and defendit the same, albeit cruellie chargit both with cartow and muscat schot in gryte aboundans, quhilk wes moir feirfullie renewit whill as the Lord Oboyne wes marcheing up the water syde. At last brave Johnstoun is unhappellie hurt in the thie or leg be the buffet of ane stonn throwin out of the brig by violens of ane schot, so that he culd do no more service. He haistellie callis for ane horss and sayes to his soldiouris, 'Gallantis do for your selffis, and haist yow to the toune'; quhairupone thay all with himself took the flight. Then followit in certane captaines [of the Covenanters] quiklie takis the brig peceablie, and kest out thair collouris. The Lord Oboyne, seing

* Spalding, I., 209-10.

thair horssmen stay upon the uther syd of the water and not coming throw the water as thay seimit to intend, and withal seing thair collouris on the brig, takis the flight shamefullie, but (without) straik of sword or ony uther kynd of vassallage, for he and his horssmen lay under bankis and brayis saiffing thame selffis fra the cartow, and beheld the Aberdein's men defend the Brig as ye have hard, quhilk was pitiefully lost by the ingoeing of the soldiouris to Johne Forbes buriall, as ye have heard, and by the Lord Oboyne his leaving of the samen, and chieflie by the unhappie hurt which brave Johnstoun receavit.*

So ended the Battle of the Bridge of Dee. The victors, seizing the four brass pieces on the bridge, marched triumphantly into Aberdeen, while the townsfolk "for plaine fear fled the toun, with thair wyfis and children in thair armes and careit on thair bakis weiping and murning most pitiefullie, straying heir and thair not knowing quhair to goe."

The names of some of the Aberdeen men slain we know, for Spalding, who must have been an eye-witness of some part of this long-remembered fight, noted certain of them. Among others "Seton of Pitmedden, ane brave gentilman, wes suddantlie schot ryding up the water with the lord Oboyne." This was Bonny John Seton of the ballad.

Upon the eighteenth day of June,
A dreary day to see,
The southern lords did pitch their camp
Just at the Bridge of Dee.

* Spalding, I., 210-11.

Bonny John Seton of Pitmedden,
A bold baron was he,
He made his testament ere he went out,
The wiser man was he.

He left his land to his young son,
His lady her dowry,
A thousand crowns to his daughter Jean,
Yet on the nurse's knee.

Then out came his lady fair,
A tear into her e'e ;
Says, "Stay at home, my own good lord,
O stay at home with me !"

He looked over his left shoulder,
"Cried, Soldiers follow me !"
O then she looked in his face,
An angry woman was she ;
"God send me back my steed again,
But never let me see thee !"

His name was Major Middleton
That manned the Bridge of Dee ;
His name was Colonel Henderson
That let the cannons flee.

His name was Major Middleton
That manned the Bridge of Dee ;
And his name was Colonel Henderson
That dung Pitmedden in three.

Some rode on the black and grey,
And some rode on the brown,
But the bonny John Seton
Lay gasping on the ground.*

* See for the whole ballad, Professor Child's English and Scottish Popular Ballads, edited by Helen Child Sargent and G. L. Kittredge, p. 481. The ballad errs in the name of the

Often in the course of the Covenanting struggle the Bridge of Dee was used by the opposing forces, but not again did it play a central part as in the conflict of 1639. When Montrose, become an ardent Royalist, again led an army along the same road against Aberdeen (now on the Covenanter side) on that black day in September, 1644, he doubtless remembered the struggle at the capture of the bridge five years before. Accordingly, instead of approaching the town by the Bridge of Dee he led his army across the river a few miles west of it and drew near the town by the "Twa-mile Cross." It was the Crabstone that on that occasion became the scene of the memorable battle and rout, the most disastrous day for Aberdeen probably in the whole period of its history.

As the Civil War went on the bridge gave access to the Cromwell troopers; and away towards the end of the century, after the fruitless victory of Killiecrankie, 1689, and the subsequent rout of the Haughs of Cromdale, Claverhouse's Highlandmen must have crossed by the Bridge of Dee when harass-

officer who "manned the Bridge"—it was Johnston, not Middleton. Middleton was in the other camp. There are other versions of the ballad, see Prof. Child, as above. The writer of the View of the Diocese (1732) states that in his day, at the Two-Mile Cross, about a mile north-west of the Bridge of Dee, there was a cairn to the memory of John Seton who was shot at the battle of the Bridge of Dee. View of the Diocese, p. 359. The cairn has long since disappeared.

ing Aberdeen before their final dispersion. Their insulting and oppressive conduct in the town was long remembered, and but deepened the more or less latent hostility that has been the invariable relationship between the Aberdonians and the Celts through history.

Before the seventeenth century closed, the stone port on the bridge received unusual attention from the townsfolk. It was resolved by the Town Council, 6th November, 1679—"to caus hew the toune's armes and Bischop Elphinstone's armes upon the port of the Brig of Dee, and to caus illuminat the same in decent forme; as also to illuminat the former armes upon the said bridge."* It would be extremely interesting to know what led the Council at this time into past interests to such an extent as this entry indicates. It was in this period (1686, to be precise) that they resolved on the construction of the fine Market Cross, with its medallion portraits of Stuart Sovereigns, which stands to-day as the finest, if not quite the oldest, Market Cross in Scotland. So they were evidently interested in sculptured work of this kind. In any case, it is remarkable to find them reverting to an ancient practice of colour in decorative stone work, and remarkable, too, that they should be found giving such effect to some definite inquiries into the

*Extracts from Council Register (Record Society) II., 299.

"Our Lady of Good Success"

Statue of the Virgin and Child that stood in the Chapel of the Bridge. Now in Brussels.

history of the structure. It can hardly be doubted that in this significant entry we have the solution of two puzzling little problems relative to the coats of arms that still form such a striking feature of the bridge.

These two little problems had better be disposed of here.

In the first place, doubts were expressed in a previous page as to whether the coat of arms of the town, still to be seen on the west side of the bridge, had been there originally. Repeated examination of it accentuates the doubt, for the sculpture is of quite a different character from any others on the bridge, and, as already said, it is too clear for four centuries of age. And yet it is odd that although the sculpture is sharp in some respects, it is much damaged as if it had been exposed specially to dangers other than the weather. Now, what more likely than that this is the identical block of the town's arms erected on the stone port above the roadway of the bridge in 1679? The port was removed in 1774, and the likelihood is that the coat of arms, on being removed from the port, was carefully inserted into the west side of the bridge as we see it to-day.

The other point has reference to the arms of William Elphinstone. It is singular that every coat of arms on the bridge is on either a buttress or a pier with the single exception of a coat of arms

of William Elphinstone which is built into the west wall of the bridge, into the spandrel of the southmost arch, precisely under the spot where the port stood. There is no reasonable explanation of the exceptional position of this coat of arms except that it was the other piece of sculpture referred to in the minute above-quoted, cut for the bridge port in 1679, removed from the port in 1774, and inserted in the wall of the bridge itself in a position as near as possible to its original one.

It was probably in these last years of the seventeenth century that public attention began to be specially directed to the condition of the bridge. The structure had now endured for nearly two hundred years. It was a weighty piece of masonry, having a total span of 432 feet, and as it had never received anything but current superficial repairs, enough merely to keep going, it is not surprising that as the eighteenth century opened its condition began to cause the town's authorities much uneasiness.

Only in 1713, however, were anything like definite steps taken. In May of that year the Council authorised the Master of Kirk and Bridge Works to buy from Johnshaven 120 bolls of lime "for the use of the Bridge of Dee."* But that was found to be inadequate. On 13th November

*Council Register, Vol. LVIII., f. 319.

they resolved that "fitt persons go out the morrow at nyn o'clock before noon and visit the cais and condition of the Bridge of Dee and if it will be needfull to repair and calsey the same, and to report the nixt Counsell Day, and the Master of Kirk Works to be Conveener."* The report was serious, for on the next Council day, 2nd December, 1713, the Council granted warrant to James Bartlett, Master of Kirk and Bridge Works, to pay £780 8*s.* 10*d.* Scots, for lime and "trees" for the repair of the bridge.†

Still the deterioration of the bridge went on, and it was placed in the charge of a new official. When, in 1705, the town brought in its first water supply, properly so called, and erected in the Castlegate, the ornamental stone fountain that, surmounted by its leaden statuette, is still a familiar object in the Green, they appointed William Lindsay, goldsmith, overseer of the new water supply. In 1714 they made Lindsay overseer of the Town's Public Works, and in this capacity he had charge of the Bridge of Dee. But soon afterwards something went wrong. The Council, who had paid him a salary of £200, found it necessary, in June, 1716, "for weighty considerations" to dismiss Lindsay, and prohibited the officials from

*Council Register, Vol. LVIII., f. 341.

†Ibid., LVIII., f. 350.

paying him any more money. They afterwards turned their attention to obtaining outside specialist opinion on the condition of the bridge; hence took place the important reconstruction works about to be described.

CHAPTER V

Prospective reconstruction of the Bridge—An Overseer appointed—Southern Architects consulted—The Town Council and Restoration works—A Master Mason—The preliminary wages bill—Restoration works in progress, 1718-1723—Some curious payments—The Master Mason pensioned—Memorial tablets.

AT the opening of the eighteenth century the Bridge of Dee must have been in rather an insecure condition, for there was an uneasy feeling in the minds of the authorities with regard to it. In 1713 temporary repairs were made, 120 bolls of lime being brought ftom Johnshaven for the purpose. William Lindsay, goldsmith, overseer of the new water works, who had been given charge of the bridge, seems to have given the Town Council such an account of its state at this time that he was sent to Edinburgh to get expert advice with regard to it.* Afterwards, the Council went in a body to inspect it, and authorised the purchase

*Item, payed to William Lindsay for his expense in goeing to Edinburgh and getting advyce anent the Bridge of Dee, £222 15*s.* 2*d.* (Scots). Accounts of Kirk and Bridge works, 1712-13.

of 300 bolls of lime, sixty fir trees, and forty pieces of freestone for its repair, at a cost of about £800 (Scots).*

Then followed a few years of inaction. The Council were not without their difficulties, indeed. It was at this time, 1716, that they dismissed William Lindsay, who, although he refused to demit office, went to reside in Edinburgh and so deprived the Council of skilled advice.† But the necessity of taking action was forced upon them, and accordingly, in 1717, they engaged two southern architects to come to Aberdeen and advise them on the condition and repair of the bridge—Robert Strachan, architect, Dundee, and Alexander McGill, architect, evidently of Edinburgh, possibly the person consulted by William Lindsay on his professional visit to Edinburgh a few years before.

These outside architects spent several days independently examining the bridge, and gave the Council plain indication of the need of large repairs throughout the structure. So far as can be made out, they recommended no change in the plan or style of the bridge. It seems to have been

*Scots money was equal to one-twelfth sterling money. It ceased to be used in reckoning the town's accounts in 1758-59.

†Some years afterwards they paid Lindsay £40 to formally relinquish his claim to office.

wholly reparation works, very largely hidden work in the internal construction of the bridge, but clearly of an important and costly character. The Council took time to consider the architects' advice, but from the first they were prepared to do what was necessary. At length, 11th December, 1717,

> The said Day, the Provast reported that conform to the former Act of Counsell, of date the twenty day of November last by-past, a great many of the Counsellors had mett and considered the severall consultations anent the Bridge of Dee; And that they had agreed that the said Bridge be repaired and caulsied, and for that end that Lyme, Stone, and all other Materialls fitt for carrying on the said work be instantly provyded that the same may be begun in the ensuing Spring tyme; And that Boats be provyded, Masons, and Cawseers (?) and all other persons be agreed with; All which being considered by the said Prvost, Baillies, and Counsell; They approved of the foresaid Agreement and appoynts the same to be gone on with; And recommended to the Master of Kirk and Bridge Works to be diligent in the premises; And to take for his assistance therein and at the work of the said Bridge James Bartlett and George Sinclair, Merchants in Aberdeen, besydes the Magistrates are to give their concurrence at all occasions necessary.*

* Council Registrar, LVIII., f. 574. The Provost was John Gordon (Campvere), the first representative of the Aberdeen group of burghs to the British Parliament, 1708-1710. He was paid his expenses as M.P., £379 stg. James Bartlett, above mentioned, was the immediately preceding Master of Bridge Works.

When spring of 1718 came the Council were not in a position to proceed with the reparation works, and the summer was well over before they had made a beginning. They instructed that stones should be provided "for droppeing in about and near the pillars above and below of the Bridge of Dee to keep the waters due deepness towards the middle of the arches."* They also gave orders that a house of dry stone and "fail" be built near the bridge forty-four feet long and twelve feet wide to hold materials for the repair of the bridge, and they authorised the Master of Kirk and Bridge Works to provide all necessary materials for the work of repairing the bridge, he to act in consultation with the office-bearers of the Council, and with Dr. James Gregory of the University, and Dr. Gordon of Kingswells as specially interested and perhaps specially qualified in such things.

One more preliminary step they took of essential consequence. That was to engage a skilled mason who should be able to take actual charge of the reparation works. The man they pitched upon, who really fulfilled the duties of both Architect and Master of Works throughout the operations, was Alexander Riach, mason, a man of standing in the craft in Aberdeen, who was

* Council Register, LVIII., f. 604. The boulder stones thus "dropped" in near the piers are still in position.

Warden of the Mason Lodge at the time he was engaged for the Bridge of Dee work.* We shall see presently how admirably he performed his work—indeed, we have the standing proof of that in the efficiency of the bridge at this day.

Nothing can better show, perhaps, the scope of the operations in that first year of actual work than to quote the payments made for work throughout the year—from Michaelmas, 1717, to Michaelmas, 1718.

DISBURSEMENTS, BRIDGE OF DEE.

	(Scots).
Item payed for stamped paper to William ffyfe, Arthur Robertson, and Thomas and William Simsons assedations, ...	£0 19 6
Item payed to Alexr Kemp and Alexr Riach Massons of Arles when they engadged for the Bridge of Dee, ...	6 0 0
Item given to Thomas Reid of Arles when he entered to make a Coble, ...	0 12 0
Item payed John Walker for cleansing the Bridge from Mertimas, 1717, to Mertimas, 1718 years, ...	8 0 0
Item for Iron and Iron-work to the Cradles for the Bridge conform to accompt and warrand, ...	36 18 6
Item for Timber and Workmanship of the Cradles per accompt and warrand, ...	34 16 6

*He became a member of the Aberdeen Lodge in 1693, so that when engaged for the Bridge of Dee he would be a man well into middle life. Particulars extracted from the Lodge books by Mr. T. Mackintosh, Secretary, Aberdeen Lodge, No. I.

	(Scots).
Item payed Mr. Strachan, Architect in Dundee, for a Consultation anent the Bridge, four guineas, and spent with him per particular accompt and warrand, ...	£64 8 6*
Item payed that wes spent two severall tymes at Visiting the Bridge, per warrand, ...	20 15 6
Item payed to some Seamen in assisting to put up scaffolds upon the Bridge, ...	13 10 0
Item that wes spent in Robrt Burnetts' with patrik Bannerman, Doctor Gordon, Kingswells, and others who visited the Bridge,	17 15 0
Item payed to Alexr Kemp for Masson work at the Bridge, ...	21 0 0
Item to William Napier, Boatman, for service with Boat when Mr. McGill visited and visied the Bridge, and for a supplie to William Craig who gote a bruise, as per warrand, ...	8 0 0
Item that wes spent with Mr. McGill, Architect, in Robrt Burnett's, as per warrand, ...	10 10 6
Item that wes spent in patrick Cruickshank's with Mr. McGill, as per accompt and warrand, ...	9 2 0
Item payed to the said Mr. Alexr McGill, Architect, for comeing to this place to see and visie the Bridge of Dee and for ripeing up the said Bridge and giveing advyse anent the repair thereof per warrand, ...	378 0 0
Item payed for a purse to hold the said gold given to Mr. McGill, ...	0 12 0

*It will be noted that the four guineas for the consultation formed four-fifths of the total payment. £64 8*s.* 6*d.* seems a large sum, but it was really about five guineas.

(Scots).

Item that wes spent with Mr. McGill when he gave in his Consultation and otherwayes, as per warrand, ...	£16	16	0
Item payed for a large ferryboat for the water of Dee to supplie and carry over passengers and horses when the Bridge is in repairing,	538	5	2
Item payed for a loading of Murray stones, as per account and warrand, ...	52	16	0
Item of Nynteen Pund fyfe Shilling Scots payed that wes spent of expenss for the two or three dayes Mr. McGill stayed at the Bridge, as per warrand, ...	19	5	0
Item payed for Holling Stones for the use of the Bridge, as per warrand, ...	33	0	6
Item payed for carrying the Said Stones to the Bridge, ...	38	0	4
Item payed for the cess of the lands of Gilcomston, ...	55	2	8
Item payed for the smith and wright work, for two carts, to the Bridge of Dee, ...	12	6	4
Item payed of Expenss severall tymes by the Compter at the Bridge, ...	3	0	0*

These may be termed the preliminary payments. In January, 1719, the Council authorised the purchase, from James Ogilvie, mason, Elgin, of "ane thousand roch pend stones to be delivered att Aberdeen for the use of the Bridge of Dee," at sixteen shillings, Scots, apiece ; and still later they approve the purchase of timber from the Duke of Gordon

* Manuscript Accounts of the Kirk and Bridge Work Aberdeen, 1717-1718.

for "combs" for the bridge. Again, in August, 1720, they buy five hundred freestone blocks from Gilbert Smith, architect in Edinburgh; in October, 1721, they buy freestone from John Ross, mason, Elgin, and simultaneously they contracted with Robert Anderson, shipmaster in Aberdeen, "To goe to the South firth with his ship and bring for the use of the Bridge of Dee a loading of free stone bought from John Stewart of Hales(?). Granite was also in demand for the work. William Menzies of Pitfodels, a wealthy and generous neighbour, opened a quarry on the hill of Pitfodels and allowed the Council to take as much stone out of it as they wished for the repairing of the bridge. The Council accepted the offer, and voluntarily passed a resolution that this "most generous and frankly granted opportunity" was to hold good only during Mr. Menzies' good pleasure, and was not to interfere in any way with his right of property.*

All this time, judging from the payments, a considerable number of workmen must have been employed in the reparation works. In the year 1719-20, the disbursements, mainly in wages to "masons and barrowmen," amounted to about £7,500 (Scots), equal to fully £600 sterling. In 1720-1, the payments were the same; in 1721-22, these amounted to nearly £9,000 (Scots); and in

* Council Register, LIX., ff. 25-6.

1722-23, to nearly £8,500 (Scots). The payments certainly included the cost of materials, but that did not amount to a very large proportion of the whole. The wages bill, on the other hand, was heavy, as will be seen from these payments, 1722-3, all duly made "as per accompt and warrand"—

	(Scots).
Item payed to Masons and Barrowmen for work at the Bridge of Dee from the seventh of September, 1722, to the fourteenth of the said moneth	£138 11 4
Item payed to Masons and Barrowmen, 14th September to 21st, ...	132 19 0
Item payed to Masons and Barrowmen, 21st September to 28th, ...	136 13 6
Item payed to Masons and Barrowmen, 28th September to 5th October, ...	141 15 0
Item payed to Masons and Barrowmen, 5th October to 12th	147 3 6
Item payed to Masons and Barrowmen, 12th October to 19th, ...	136 2 0
Item payed to Masons and Barrowmen, 19th October to 26th, ...	147 10 4
Item payed to George Scott, Blacksmith, at the Bridge of Dee for smith work from the eight day of June, 1722, to the twenty-first day of September, 1722 years, ...	53 6 8
Item payed to James McKenzie, Blacksmith, for smith work, 28th April to 31st October,	120 0 0
Item payed for sixty-three pieces of free stone to John Rob, Mason, for shoar dues thereof and severall other debursements, ...	69 19 8

(Scots).

Item payed to Robert Low, Wright, for Hurle Barrows and other wright work at the Bridge of Dee, ... £22 0 0

Item payed for Bringing the Tools from the Quarrie, and for tempering them at Ruthriestone, for takeing up the Lyttle Boat and for putting in order the hewn stones, and otherwayes, ... 7 6 0

Item payed to Alexr Marr at the Bridge of Dee for the maill (rent) and deuty of two riggs of Land possesst be him and allowed for the use of the Bridge of Dee carts to pass and repass upon, ... 5 13 4

Item payed for One Hundred and Seventy One Bolls of Lyme carried thereto, and sand thereto, and otherwayes, ... 171 15 0

Item payed to Masons and Barrowmen, 18th January, 1723, to 25th 47 17 0

Item payed to Masons and Barrowmen, 25th January, to 1st February, ... 104 8 2

Item payed for repairing the Bridge of Dee Boat, ... 41 2 4

Item payed to Andrew Davidson in Old Ferryhill, John Reid, and John Menzies, indwellers in Aberdeen, for damage done to their Cornes by the people and horses comeing throw the samen to the Boat, for Crop 1722 years, ... 9 3 4

Item payed for fifty bolls of Lyme, carriage thereof, and for ane Express to Elgine, and otherwayes, ... 57 11 0

Item payed to John Ross, Mason, for 820 pieces of freestone at eighteen shillings, Scots, per piece, and for thirty bolls of Lyme, carriage thereof, and sand thereto,

	(Scots).
and to men for attending the Boat, and otherwayes, ...	£808 14 4
Item payed to William Hepburn, for mails for the use of the Bridge of Dee, ...	14 5 2
Item of fyfy-two pund fyve shilling, Scots money, payed for forty-one and one-half stones of Lead and fraught thereof Bought for joyning the Land Stalls of the Bridge of Dee, ...	52 5 0
Item payed to Alexr Cruickshank for painting of Bishop Elphinstone's large coat of armes, and for gold Leaf thereto, ...	7 2 0
Item payed to James Robertson, Barrowman, who hath got a Bruise at the Bridge of Dee, ...	6 0 0
Item payed to Alexr Baillie, Wright, for wright work be himself and servants this year in putting up and takeing down the Combs at the Bridge of Dee, ...	99 0 0
Item payed to Robert Law, wright, for Ditto at the Bridge, ...	94 1 6
Item payed to Alexr Forbes, Overseer, at the Bridge, for extraordinar service Be him during the tyme he has attended the building of the Bridge, ...	24 0 0

In that year, 1722-3, as above-mentioned, the total disbursements amounted to about £8,500 (Scots), equal to about £700 sterling. The payments to "Masons and Barrowmen" continued to be made weekly till the end of December, 1723, but by that time the weekly total had fallen to from eighty to sixty pounds, Scots—ultimately, in the week 13th to 20th December,

to £13 4*s.* 8*d.* (Scots) which would be payment for two or three men finishing up.

On the completion of the structure the woodwork, iron, and other materials used in the building operations were brought to the "shoar" and rouped. There was still work to be done, however, and from the beginning of June to the middle of September a squad of causewaymen were employed in laying the roadway of the Bridge. They must have worked in a very old-fashioned leisurely way to occupy the time, and there must have been a few at it, for the wages bill amounted to an average of forty pounds, Scots, per week.

At length, towards the end of 1724, the whole work was complete. The Town Council had expended on the reparation works, from the beginning of 1717 to the end of 1724 not less than £37,000 (Scots), equal to over £3000 sterling. It was a much larger sum, probably, than they anticipated when they began, but they appear to have been well pleased with their work—certainly they were well satisfied with the work of those in charge. We have seen that they "gratified" Alexander Forbes, an overseer, with a payment of £24 "for extraordinar service" on the bridge. Forbes had turned ill while engaged in the operations, and died, and the following entries tell of the kindliness of his employers—

The Bridge from N.E.

Showing (1) how level the Bridge is; (2) different heights of the arches; (3) design of the piers; (4) ribbing of the arches. *Photo by* R. GIBBON.

(Scots).

Item of Twenty Pound Scots money pay'd for the Funerals of the Deceast Alexander Forbes, overseer of the Bridge when it was rebuilding, he being a poor man and haveing nothing to pay the same, ... £20 0 0

Item of Twenty Pound fourteen shilling eight-pennies pay'd to the said Alexander Forbes when on his sickbed before his death as a supplie to him, being both as per warrands, 20 14 8

In Alexander Riach, the man in charge of the works, the Council had a most worthy master mason, whose work endures, much of it practically as it left his hands, to this day. They acknowledged his faithful and efficient service by pensioning him for life. Thus, the Council Minutes, when the mason work was practically completed—

14 September, 1723.—The said Day, the Magistrates and Counsell, Takeing into their serious consideration the good service done by Alexander Riach, Master Mason at the bridge of Dee, the whole time that the said Bridge has been in repairing, and that he has been at Extraordinar pains and and diligence thereanent to the great satisfaction of all persons concerned and to the saveing much money the time of the said Reparation, He haveing supplied the Place of Ane Architect after the first Schem was drawen by Mr. Alexander McGill, Architect—Therefore the saids Magistrats and Counsell granted and hereby grants to the said Alexander Riach the soum of Fourty Pounds Scots money Yearly dureing his lyfetyme for his said good service and Extraordinar Diligence as said is, And ordanes the Master of Kirk and Bridge Works of Aberdeen, present or to come to content pay and deliver to the said Alexander Riach

out of the Bridge of Dee charge yearly dureing his lifetyme, the said soum of Forty Pounds forsaid att the terms in the year Mertimes and Whitsunday by equal Portions Beginning the first terms payment at the term of Mertimes next to come for the preceding half year.*

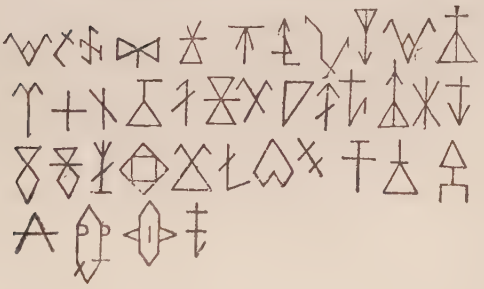
Among the last works that Alexander Riach performed at the bridge was to erect on the west side a tablet telling of the reconstruction works at that time, and on the east side a series of date-blocks indicating the completion of the several parts. They are there to be read to this day, as we shall see presently. Doubtless he and his workmen left on various parts of the structure the masons' marks that was still a traditional usage in the craft. We know there were masons' marks on the bridge within memory, and they are recorded in the accompanying block, but it seems impossible now to distinguish many such on the stone work of the structure.

When Riach and his men left their completed task in 1725, it was still a narrow bridge as we think nowadays, only fourteen feet and a half wide, but not narrow as compared with other historic bridges of the country, and sufficient in that respect for the road traffic of the time. It was long, and straight, and strong, but not unattractive—although that consideration would hardly be present then—for its graceful arches and

* Council Register, LIX., f. 76.

deep harmonious ribbing gave a certain pleasing shade and mystery, and seen against the massive background of the lower Grampian hills, on the south, it appeared almost a lightsome structure for all its solidity and strength.

MASONS' MARKS ON BRIDGE OF DEE.



CHAPTER VI

The Bridge of Dee Road—The "Causey Mounth"—The ancient line of the Road—The Town Council and the Maintenance of the Highway—An application to the Privy Council—The Causey Port or Gateway—Its precise site—Removal of the Causey Port and the Port on the Bridge of Dee—Some famous Travellers on the Causey Mounth—The new South Road.

THE use of the bridge implies the use of a road leading over it, and the story of the Bridge of Dee road is not less significant than the story of the bridge itself. It is older than the bridge by several centuries that we know of. We cannot follow the fascinating story in any great detail, but an intelligent general idea of its history and use through the centuries is essential if we are to have a right view of the part that the bridge has played in keeping Aberdeen in living touch with the outer world.

For it must be remembered that for many long years this South Road was the only direct means of land communication between Aberdeen and the great centres of the country. Throughout

centuries it was known as the Cowy Mounth because it was the roadway by Cowy (or Cowie, as it now is) over the mounth, or ridge of the Grampians to Aberdeen. It was also known as the Causey Mounth (from the French *caucie*, now *chaussée*) because along part of its way it was the raised or paved road or highway over an extensive moss.*

How early this highway existed it is quite impossible to tell. Probably enough, there was some kind of a road there when Aberdeen got its first royal charter from William the Lion—in some respects the most precious document still preserved in the town's Charter Room. This was in 1171-85, granting certain trading privileges to the burgesses of Aberdeen, and all other burgesses "north of the munth."† The highway was probably in existence in 1296, when Edward I.

*There were, as is well known, a number of such named passes over the "Mounth" along Deeside—the Fir Mounth, crossing by Mount Keen to Ballater, the Capel (or Chapel) Mounth between Glen Clova and Glen Muick, the Cairn-na-Mounth, connecting the parishes of Fordoun and Strachan, still largely used, the Slug Mounth, leading from Stonehaven to Durris and Strachan by the western shoulder of Cairn-mon-earn, an admirable road still.

†This interesting charter, and its translation, will be found in Mr. P. J. Anderson's "Charters and other Writs relating to the Burgh of Aberdeen," p. 3.

visited the north, but that great King did not use at least the northern end of it.*

We touch firm ground for the first time in regard to the Causey Mounth in 1384. In that year, as we have already seen, a notable burgess of Aberdeen, John Crab, proprietor of Kincorth, left to his son, Paul Crab, forty shillings annually for the use, necessity, and maintenance of the Causey Mounth and the Bridge of Dee.† From this, it is quite clear that the highway was then in common use, and had been for probably a long time.

But it must not be supposed that this ancient highway, the Causey Mounth, is the same as the present South Road from Stonehaven leading over the Bridge of Dee. The latter is only in what might be called its youthful prime, being only about a century old, and we can still trace the old highway in portions of it that have escaped absorption in cultivated land. The Causey Mounth lay along its whole length slightly westward of the line of the present trunk road. After passing Cowie, running northward along the eastern fringe of what used to be Cowy Common, the road passed close to Muchalls Castle, thence entered Portlethen parish near where, in the middle of the eighteenth century, "Jeally Bran's" Inn stood, which has

*For his itinerary on that occasion, see *Ante*, p. 3.

†*Ante*, p. 5.

given the curious name to Gillybrands farm. A little further north it passed Bourtree Bush, where the U.F. Church of that name stands to-day, and about a mile and a half of the old highway may still be walked in that neighbourhood, between St. Ternan's Chapel, Muchalls, and Berryhill, Portlethen, near which this remnant comes to an abrupt end. But we pick it up again on the high ground at Craighead, about a mile west of Portlethen station. South of Craighead farm, this ancient roadway is merely a strip of enclosed, grass-covered, boggy ground. From the farm northward, however, and passing close at hand the enclosed Badentoy stone circle, it is kept up as a good, serviceable farm road.

A few hundred yards north of the stone circle the highway is crossed by the road from Findon to Maryculter, and from this point the old Causey Mounth road is still an excellent, well-used thoroughfare. Coming northward, towards the city, it passes through the flat piece of country where the moss lay in the old days—the moss of Aberdeen, as far as one can make out, which was inspected periodically by the town's authorities—and this was the boggy part of the highway that had to be causewayed during centuries to afford a safe crossing for man and beast. A little further north the road passes close to the "Clifton" quarry, a quarter

of a mile south-west of the Blue Hill Cairn. Soon it strikes up the southern slope of the "Mounth" and works its way over the ridge of the hill through a delightfully wooded section to the open northern crest. It thence descends past the door of Banchory-Devenick Schoolhouse, and the adjoining school, where the traveller catches the first glimpse of the city of Aberdeen and the magnificent sweep of Aberdeen Bay.

From this point the road is familiar to all visitors to the Blue Hill. Scarcely ever out of sight of the city, it bends over the lower ridge near the farm of Tollohill, and in a fairly steep declivity it emerges on the south Deeside road at Den of Leggart, or Poldown, Mill, a quarter of a mile west of the Bridge of Dee.

The maintenance of the Causey Mounth in a passable state of repair was a matter of vital interest to Aberdeen. Accordingly, the town undertook the upkeep of it from the earliest time of which we have any record of the road, and through the boggy moorland already mentioned, about a mile south of the Blue Hill, they laid down the "causey," or bedding of stones, that gave the road its name. There is still a "Causeyend" there, marking the limit of the paving, just as Causeway-end was the limit of the causey in Aberdeen itself, and in other places. There was about three-

quarters of a mile of the "causey," so that it was not without reason that the road was so described.

From an early date the town called on owners of lands through which the Causey Mounth passed to help in defraying the cost of upkeep, but they were not always successful in getting payment. Among the records in the Town House is a "summons by the burgh for a feu-duty granted 9th April, 1378, for supporting Calsey at Cowie Month."* Again, on 3rd October, 1632, the Town Council summoned a meeting of the neighbouring lairds relative to the repair "of the calsies of Month Cowye," for the roadway was then evidently in very bad condition. But these expedients having failed, the Council took the effectual step of presenting to the Privy Council of Scotland, on 17th July, 1634, a "Supplication" for authority to exact a toll on the Causey Mounth to pay the cost of mending and upholding the same. They set forth that—

> The Calsies in Cowymonth ar now so worn and decayed as there will be no possibilitie of passage in this approaching winter, and the supplicants hes done alreadie all that lyes in thame for the mending and up holding of these Calseyis, bot the work is so great, and the manie other burdeins lying upoun the said burghe presseth thame so hardlie as it lyis not in their power to outtred

*Inventory of Records, "Charter and Other Writs," by Mr. Anderson, p. 401.

and perfytee that work—there being none within the kingdome more important and necessar.*

The Privy Council not only granted the Aberdonians the right to exact a toll, as they requested; it also granted them, "for the better collecting and ingaddering of this custom and dewtie," authority,

To caus big and sett ane port at suche pairt and place of the calseyis as they from tyme to tyme sall think expedient, and to close the port and suffer none to have passage that way bot such as sall pay the dewtie foirsaid, debarring all otheris frome passage who sall refuse to pay the same.

This authority the Privy Council granted for the space of nineteen years. But it was renewed, again with limit of duration, as an Act of the Scots Parliament, in 1661, the first Parliment after the Restoration, and the Causey Port, or Gate, that had been erected by the town continued to do its duty there for a hundred years more.

The precise site of the Causey Port is not difficult to fix. A writer of about 1725 describes it as it stood—

To the N. of Auchorties 1½ mile is the Caulsay port, with a large Caulsey, which pass throw a large moss, and the port was built and the Caulsey laid in 1684 [1634] by the City of Aberdeen, and the said town setts in tack

*Reproduced in Charters and Other Writs, p. 256. Also in Privy Council Register, of date, 1634.

the said port to a man who gathers up from every horse that passes throw the port eight pennies Scots.*

Then we have the spot interestingly fixed for us otherwise. It so happens that the name has been continued in the farm of Causeyport, on Badentoy estate, situated close to the Causey Mounth, where the old Causey Port, or Gateway, stood for fully a century. During all that time the highway continued to fulfil its beneficent purpose. Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century the Town Council acknowledged ancient obligations on them to maintain the Causey Mounth, but the upkeep of the highways was passing into other hands, and the Town Council became less and less willing to share responsibility for a trunk road that was passing clearly beyond their jurisdiction. On 26th March, 1759, they granted £15 sterling out of the Bridge of Dee funds "for repairing the Stonehyve Road," but they resolved at the same time "that no more [is] to be given for that purpose in time coming."† But they were rather better than their resolution for they contributed £10 stg. towards the same object in 1775, which was probably the last contribution that they made towards this ancient highway under the old conditions.‡

* Macfarlane's Geographical Collections, I., p. 108.

†Council Register, Vol. LXII., f. 243.

‡Council Register, Vol. LXIV., f. 58.

And new conditions were now arising. The mail coaches were coming in to revolutionize travelling throughout the country. People, not obliged to, were beginning to move about from place to place with the mere object of travelling, and the pleasantness of the new means of getting about was a surprise and a delight to the whole country-side. Although it was 1787 before the first mail coach to run between Edinburgh and Aberdeen was made, the roads were being more and more used for the new wheel traffic, and the Causey Port on the old Stonehaven highway was found to be in the way. On 15th April, 1760, accordingly, the Town Council "agreed to consent to the taking down of the Causey Port in order to streight and widen the king's highway."*

It was not long before the stone port on the Bridge of Dee had to be cleared away by the pressure of the same need. In 1773 the fate of this interesting structure was decreed in the following Act of the Town Council—

> 14th August, 1773.—The said Day, the Council having visited the Bridge of Dee are unanimously of opinion that the Port and Stone Walls upon the south end of the Bridge are a great obstruction and hindrance to the free and easy passage of all carriages passing along the Bridge and therefore agree that the said Port, and Walls on each side thereof shall be removed and taken down as soon as possible, and that the entry on that end

*Council Register, Vol. LXII., f. 201.

of the Bridge should be made open betwixt the said two parapets; as also that the Corner of the West Parapet Wall without the Port should be removed as far as possible so as to make the passage on that end of the Bridge still more easy and commodious for carriages; and recommend to the Magistrates to cause the same to be done as soon as convenient, and to defray the expense thereof out of the Bridge of Dee Charge.*

But the port was not just presently removed. The idea of striking off the corner of the west parapet wall was to round off the sharp angle at which the Causey Mounth road, coming from Leggart's Den, turned on to the Bridge. Some little difficulty seems to have arisen, but on 22nd July, 1774, on the occasion of another visitation, and having resolved on certain minor repairs on the bridge itself, the Council went on—

The Council further recommend to the Magistrates to employ proper tradesmen to cause take down and remove the Port upon the south side of the Bridge, and to Open and Enlarge the Passage (Roadway) from the high-road upon each side agreeable to the Council's Act of last year during the visitation of the Bridge, and to meet and settle with the Doers (agents) of Mr. Menzies of Pitfoddels as they shall think proper for what ground may be necessary belonging to them for enlarging the said Passage.†

We take it, in the absence of any further reference anywhere to the port after that date, that the old structure was then cleared away.

*Council Register, Vol. LXIII., f. 226.

†Council Register, Vol. LXIV., f. 24.

But the old highway of the Causey Mounth continued in use as the main road from the south for a quarter of a century after that. It had some remarkable travellers over it in the later years of its time. One of these was old Sam. Johnson, who, in the company of Boswell, drove along the Causey Mounth in the leisurely fashion he liked so well, in the gathering dusk of an August evening, 1773.* He found the country south of Aberdeen naked and hard—so generally ploughed that he found it difficult to imagine where grass would be found for the horses that tilled the fields.

Fourteen years later, travelling in the opposite direction, Robert Burns went along this old highway. Having crossed the Bridge of Dee and ascended the high ground, he could not but look back, from the ridge of the Grampians, on Aberdeen lying in its sleepy hollow in the September sunshine, and we are amused at his remark that it was "a lazy town." Probably he was right, although even a supreme genius could scarcely hope to discover all the sparkle and wit of a town in the course of a three hours' visit.†

One other notable traveller passed along the Causey Mounth, who perceived more in it than

*He was then on the journey to the Western Islands.

†In his Journal, Burns similarly described the town of Berwick-on-Tweed, "a lazy town."

either Johnson or Burns. So far as we know Walter Scott visited Aberdeen only once, in the capacity of a young advocate in attendance on the Circuit Court. This was in September, 1796. It is just possible that Scott may have paid an earlier visit with his father, who was repeatedly in Aberdeen, for he was the Edinburgh legal agent for the Town Council of Aberdeen for many years. But in any case, Scott was over the Causey Mounth in 1796, and crossing through the moorland, sometime known as the Moor of Drumforskie, he was struck by some feature in that bleak landscape. He reproduced it in "A Legend of Montrose" as the Moor of Drumthwhacket, the patrimony of Dugald Dalgetty, soldier of fortune, who would not have so very far to trudge to the Marischal College he was so fond of calling to mind.*

But the venerable Causey Mounth road was then about to be lowered from its supremacy. Already at the time of Scott's visit steps were being taken by the Kincardine County authorities and the Aberdeen Town Council to have a new road laid out between Stonehaven and Aberdeen under the new Turnpike Roads Acts which proved

* It is interesting to note that the proprietor, Sir David Stewart of Banchory, has recently changed the name of a farm here from Banchory-Hillock to Drumthwhacket to preserve this interesting association. It lies about three-quarters of a mile north east of Causey Port farm.

a really civilising influence in the north of Scotland. Plans were drawn out by Charles Abercrombie, surveyor, Edinburgh, the man who conceived the idea of our own Holburn Street, Union Street, and King Street, who, if anybody, deserves to be kept in grateful recollection by Aberdonians. The Aberdeen authorities were eager for the new access. They agreed on a first contribution of £4,000 towards the expense of it, but although it cost them £12,000 before they were done with it, they and their successors alike felt that the expenditure was justified. It was a necessity of the times, and we may all be thankful that they had the means available for work of this kind, and the enterprise to use the money in that way.

The "Aberdeen Pier"

View from N.W. corner. 1st pier, Arms of Gavin Dunbar, and Scotland. 2nd pier—The "Aberdeen Pier"—where Corner Stone was laid, widening of 1842; Arms of Aberdeen, and tablet describing widening. *Photo by* R. GIBBON

CHAPTER VII

The Road from the Bridge of Dee to the City—Ruthrieston Bridge—The Provost and his Coat of Arms—Taylor's Scheme of a Riverside Road—Abercrombie's Scheme of Holburn—The widening of the Bridge in 1841-2—Proposals of Archibald Simpson and John Smith—A higher architectural view—The work accomplished—A Problem of Low Parapets.

LONG before the new highway from Stonehaven to the Bridge of Dee, which displaced the historic "Causey Mounth," had been constructed, the Aberdeen authorities were discussing a proposed new road to lead from the Bridge of Dee to the town. For centuries—even before the bridge was built—the access to the town there had been wretched. And we can see this for ourselves from the remains of it that have come down to our own time.

The road, on leaving the north end of the Bridge of Dee, turned abruptly to the eastward and moved down the river side to the Ruthrieston Burn which it crossed by the little bridge still in subsidiary use. We have already seen how the first stone bridge was erected at this spot, from the Bridge of

Dee funds, in 1541.* That modest structure lasted for a century and a half, till the still-existing bridge was put up by the Town Council, 1693-4, in the Provostship of Robert Cruickshank of Banchory Devenick. It is not much to look at now, but Provost Cruickshank must have had some pride in it when it was erected for (without the express permission of the Council) he placed his coat of arms on the bridge to balance the arms of the town on the adjoining pier. It gave great offence to his colleagues in the Council—who were otherwise opposed to him keenly in ecclesiastical affairs—and in 1698 they caused the block bearing the Provost's arms to be reversed, and had an inscription cut on the other end of it telling that the reconstruction was effected by the Town Council from the funds of the Bridge of Dee.† After seven years—a long time for even a Town Council to be angry—the carved stone was restored to its original position, and the dilapidated arms of the Provost, as well as the equally dilapidated arms of the town may be seen there on adjoining piers to this day.

The highway, after crossing the Ruthrieston Bridge, struck into the Hardgate and found its way

* Ante, p. 43.

† The story is fully told by Mr. A. M. Munro in his sketch of Provost Cruickshank in Memorials of the Aldermen, Provosts, and Lord Provosts of Aberdeen, p. 192.

thence by the Justice Mills and the Windmill Brae over the "Bow Bridge" to the Green, and so to the heart of the town.

To take the place of this inadequate and mean entry to Aberdeen two schemes were propounded. The first, of date 1793, was the idea of George Taylor, a well known surveyor and map-maker of the north at that time. It was a road, 60 feet wide, to run from the Bridge of Dee mainly by the river side, over the Denburn by a granite bridge, along the shore by an embankment, and to turn by a curve into the foot of Marischal Street and in that way to reach the Castlegate. The other scheme was a year or two later in date, but was at once seen to be appropriate and statesmanlike. It was the plan of Charles Abercrombie, the Edinburgh surveyor, who laid out the new Stonehaven Turnpike. Connected with his scheme of Union Street and King Street, it consisted of a new highway, also 60 feet wide, from the Bridge of Dee to near the Justice Mills, there to be connected with the new line of street which ultimately took the name of Union Street. Abercrombie had also a subsidiary riverside road, but it found no favour, and never really had a chance of life.

While Abercrombie's scheme of carrying his new line of road over the valley of the How-Burn —since named Holburn—was still in prospect, the

Town Council decided on the erection of a new bridge on that prospective line of road about a hundred yards north of the Bridge of Dee. It was intended to take the place of Provost Cruickshank's Ruthrieston Bridge, and ultimately did so, and it still carries Holburn Street over the stream near what is now the Tramway terminus. Thus the Council Minutes—

> 31st August, 1795—The said Day, the Council, having considered the frequent complaints that have been made as to the improper and inconvenient situation of the small stone Bridge over the Burn of Ruthrieston, near the Bridge of Dee, and adjacent to the lands of Kamehill, whereby travellers, especially in Carriages and in the night time are often in danger of mistaking the approach to the Bridge, and falling over into the Burn in the hollow ground below, They unanimously resolve that a new Bridge of one arch, conform to a plan thereof now laid before them, shall be built over the said Burn in a more proper and convenient situation and in such manner as may best be connected with the new road intended to be made out betwixt the Bridge of Dee and the town, And referred to and empowered the Provost (George More of Raeden), Provost Auldjo, Baillie Shepherd, and the Master of Kirk and Bridge Works as a Committee to employ such skilful tradesmen as they may think most proper for the building of the said Bridge accordingly, And authorise the Master of Kirk and Bridge Works to pay the expence thereof out of the Bridge of Dee charge.*

In the following year, 1796, that part of what became Holburn Street was laid out according to

*Council Register, Vol. LXVII., f. 78.

Charles Abercrombie's plan, and the old Ruthrieston Bridge fell into disuse. The whole line of highway, joining on to the new line of Union Place and Union Street, was completed in 1807 by the old Commutation Road Trustees, and Aberdeen was at length provided with an adequate and first-class highway from the centre of the town out to the Bridge of Dee, connected there with the great trunk road to the south.*

But the Bridge of Dee itself was claiming by this time the serious attention of the authorities. Since the reparation works of 1718-1724 little had been done to it beyond occasional pointing and the removal of the port in 1774 to give a little additional room on the roadway for the growing volume of traffic. But the relief was not nearly sufficient. Opportunity was taken in 1769, on the occasion of John Smeaton's first visit to Aberdeen to report on the Harbour, to obtain a report from him relative to the Bridge of Dee. He found it a substantial structure, but too narrow, which had now come to be precisely the trouble.

> The Bridge of Dee [said Smeaton] appears to be well built, and of very good materials, and the current of the river seems to set fairly through the arches, so that it

*See Charles Abercrombie's Plan of a Highway from the Bridge of Dee to Aberdeen, 1807, recently recovered for the Corporation set of Plans; also George Skene Keith's View of the Agriculture of Aberdeen, 1811, p. 535, etc.

promises a duration for many years. Like most bridges formerly built, it is too narrow, being but 14½ feet wide within the parapets, which is too little for carriages to pass with that ease, freedom, and safety which is desirable. It is found by experience that 18 feet clear width admits of this convenience, and as this may be procured without deranging any of the more solid parts of the bridge it seems a desirable improvement.*

Smeaton suggested accordingly that granite corbels should be laid out to project along each side of the bridge for 1 foot 10 inches, and that the parapet should be moved backward on each side on these corbels to give a clear width of roadway and pavements of 18 feet. It does not strike one as a very statesmanlike scheme, and so evidently thought the townsfolk of that day. At anyrate his suggestions came to nothing. The port was removed soon afterwards, as we have seen, and the south entrance to the bridge was somewhat widened and rounded off. But the bridge remained unaltered, and the public inconvenience went on increasing well into the nineteenth century. Every now and again John Smith, the Town's Superintendent—or City Architect, as we now say—presented reports on the bridge, but these merely punctuated an era of discussion on the advisability of widening it. On the occasion of the great floods of August, 1829, a

*Reports by Smeaton, Vol. 3.

rumour got abroad that one of the piers had sunk and that other serious damage had been done. It was likely enough, for the bridges over the Dee at Ballater and Aboyne had been swept away. But, although the water had risen eight or nine feet, the report of John Smith showed that the ancient bridge had stood the test of the great spate magnificently.

At length, in 1835, the authorities determined that something must be done. It originated at a meeting of the Town Council, 7th September of that year, which was thus recorded at the time—

> A discussion arose [at the Council Meeting] on a proposal for repairing and widening the Bridge of Dee.
>
> Mr. Duffus stated that fifty years ago a plan for widening the bridge had been given in by Mr. Smeaton.
>
> The Lord Provost mentioned that he had conferred with Mr. Menzies of Pitfodels, whose property would be affected by the widening of the bridge, and that that gentlemen had expressed his willingness to concur in the scheme—there was therefore no occasion for the interference of Parliament, and the steps to be taken would rest entirely with the public.
>
> A Committee was then appointed on the subject.*

The outcome of this was that three persons were asked to submit each a report as to how the widening of the bridge ought to be gone about. One was John Smith, the City Architect. Another

* Account of the Town Council Meeting, *Aberdeen Journal*, 9th September, 1835.

was Archibald Simpson, his great rival, the most noted architect in the north-east of Scotland, and then at the height of his reputation. The third was John Gibb, the first resident Harbour Engineer of Aberdeen, associated with the quarrying and contracting firm of John Gibb & Son. Gibb wrote the Lord Provost asking to be excused on the ground that his firm would most likely give a tender for the execution of the work. Archibald Simpson submitted a long report, of date 29th October, 1835. He found the bridge was in a good state of repair, with piers of unnecessary thickness for the arches then, and so he proposed to throw out additional arching on each side to give a roadway of 27 feet "which may be accomplished without altering the form of the piers or requiring any expense for additional foundations." Archibald Simpson was beyond all men the pioneer in the use of finely dressed granite in architectural work, and so one is hardly surprised, although a little shocked, to find that he proposed to make this an entirely granite bridge. He said—

> I am of opinion that the projecting piers, as far as above the plinth, should receive a new facing of granite to correspond with the addition to the arches, and the bridge may be made, with little exception, a complete durable structure of granite throughout.*

* From the original report in the hands of the Town Clerk.

Archibald Simpson in this showed less than his usual professional discretion. His scheme would have destroyed the character of the ancient bridge, and would have given us the worst "restoration" of any historical structure in this part of Scotland.

John Smith took higher ground. Cast-iron had been mentioned as a material by which the widening might be carried out, but from cast-iron John Smith shrank. His plan, he explained—"consists of flat segment arches and spandrils of stone, extending and projecting over those of the present Bridge on each side, and having square abutments formed on the present projecting angular Piers, and surmounted with a Cornice and Parapet, as represented by the Drawings." And he went on—

> In preparing the Design I have endeavoured, as much as possible, to preserve the features and keep the character of the present bridge, and with that view, I preferred an Addition of Stone to one of Cast Iron, which last would no doubt be practicable, but in my opinion not so appropriate or secure. The stone materials of the addition may either be of granite or Morayshire Freestone, but if of the latter they would correspond better with the present Bridge, which is of that material, and would have less weight on the present foundations, although I do not apprehend that there is any risk of their being sufficient to support Granite materials.*

* From the original Report, of date 28th October, 1835, in the hands of the Town Clerk.

These reports of Simpson and John Smith were ultimately referred to James Walker, C.E., Westminster, whose plan for the improvement of the harbour of Aberdeen had just been adopted. Mr. Walker preferred the plan of John Smith, offering certain suggestions by way of amendment or improvement of the plan; but in order that conference might take place with the Kincardine Road Trustees, who were pressing for the widening of the bridge, matters were somewhat delayed.*

At length, out of all this cogitation and communications an admirable scheme emerged. It was that the bridge should be widened by 11 feet 6 inches, making the whole width 26 feet, and that the widening should be effected entirely along the west side—the then existing facings on the west side to be taken down, the new portion added, and the facings to be carefully replaced as before. The Town Council's official deliverance at this stage is worthy of being reproduced.

"17th December, 1838—The same Day, the Treasurer, from the Committee appointed on 27th March, 1837, and re-appointed on 26th ultimo, on

*The Kirk and Bridge Accounts for 1838-9 contain these items of payment—

Archibald Simpson, for Plans of proposed addition to Bridge of Dee, ... £35

John Smith, for Plans of proposed addition to Bridge of Dee, ... £30

the subject of widening the carriageway and otherwise improving the Bridge of Dee, detailed at length various steps which had been taken by the Committee in reference to the subject remitted to them, and reported that the Committee came to the unanimous opinion that as the widening of the Bridge was much required both for the comfort and safety of the public, the Council should resolve to increase the breadth of the carriageway upon the west or upper side, and otherwise improve the Bridge in the style and manner recommended by Mr. James Walker, Engineer, of London (whom, amongst other Architects, the Committee had consulted on the subject), and which appears to have been in the view of the Magistrates and Mr. John Smith, the Town's Architect, when the new approach to the Bridge was made out a considerable number of years ago, and that a sum of £5500 stg., the estimated expense of the operations, should be voted from the Bridge of Dee fund for this purpose—the works, however, not to be proceeded with unless certain arrangements are agreed to by the Turnpike Trustees regarding the removal of the Ruthrieston Toll Bar, situated on the road betwixt Union Street and the Bridge, the keeping up of this road by the Trustees in good and sufficient repair, and as to the rates of Tolls to be charged at the Bars situated at the approaches to the Bridge by the Stonehaven and South Deeside

Roads, the Committee having understood that it had been proposed to charge double Tolls or Rates on this last mentioned road upon Sundays. All which, having been considered by the Council, they approved generally of the Report by the Treasurer, but before finally deciding on the same, remitted back to the Committee to meet and confer with the Turnpike Trustees upon the points above-mentioned, with the view of adjusting and arranging the same." *

It is rather remarkable that when the scheme was finally approved of—December, 1839,—and the works advertised, no offers from contractors were received. Afterwards, December, 1840, five offers were submitted, and evidently to the surprise of the authorities the lowest offerer turned out to be a contractor of Lossiemouth, Thomas Hughes, who undertook to execute the widening operations for the very precise sum of £7,078 5*s.* 5½*d.* But Mr. Hughes failed to find security, and being much worried, doubtless, and in ill-health, he wrote to the Town Council—

Lossiemouth, *Feby.*, 1841.

Gentlemen—I regret, exceedingly, that owing to severe illness, which prevents me from leaving my bed-room, I am under the necessity of giving up the contract for widening the Bridge of Dee.

I am, etc., THOMAS HUGHES.

* Council Register, Vol. LXXV., f. 44.

The Town Council seem to have been much relieved, for they not only accepted this resignation at once, but voted Mr. Hughes a gratuity of thirty guineas to cover his expenses. At the same time, they accepted the offer of the next contractors on the list, Messrs. Macdonald & Leslie, the noted granite workers of Aberdeen, whose price was £7,250.

Everything being in order, the actual work of widening was begun on Friday, 12th March, 1841. The bridge was not closed for traffic all that year, although it is amusing to find when the tolls or pontages of the Wellington Suspension Bridge are being advertised at that time to be let in tack the inducement is offered that "In consequence of the operations at the Old Bridge of Dee, the traffic across the bridge must be much increased during this year."* The "foundation stone" of the new works was laid in the second pier on the north end of the bridge by Provost Blaikie, 28th June, 1841. Thirteen carriages with the Town Council and guests drove from the Town House to the Bridge of Dee, where their arrival was signalised by a discharge of artillery. The usual memorials were deposited in a cavity, covered by an inscribed brass plate, which will all be disclosed, like the uncovering of a long-deposited sacred human form, at some future reparation of the ancient structure.

* *Aberdeen Constitutional*, 9th April, 1841.

In February, 1842, traffic accross the bridge was entirely suspended. The Council arranged for a ferryboat to carry passengers over the river free of charge except on Sundays, when all except church-goers had to pay a half-penny.

The last ceremonial took place on the morning of 4th October, 1842. To the usual accompaniment of a public procession, a public breakfast at the residence of the Lord Provost, and much speaking and general congratulation, the widened bridge was "opened" by Lord Provost Blaikie, and passed into public ordinary use just as we know it to-day. The cost of the widening considerably exceeded the estimate, and the principal payments are worthy of note.*

PAYMENTS IN YEAR ENDING 15TH OCTOBER, 1841—

Messrs. MacDonald & Leslie to Account of Contract, ...	£2405 0 0
Mr. Hughes, Engineer, for copying Plans, etc., ...	31 10 0
Expense of laying Foundation Stone including Carriage Hire, Allowance to Workman, Expense of Coins, and other outlays, ...	98 11 1
John Smith, Architect, to Account for Plans and Specifications and Superintendence of work, ...	100 0 0

* For these items I am indebted to Mr. James W. Davidson, Depute Town Clerk, who had the payments extracted from the Town's Accounts —relative to certain legal proceedings—for the years named.

PAYMENTS IN YEAR ENDING 15TH OCTOBER, 1842—

Messrs. MacDonald & Leslie, further to Account, ...	£4431	5	1
Payment to Overseer of Works, ...	50	0	0
Allowance to Workmen at placing of Key-stone of last Arch, ...	5	10	0
George Mitchell for painting and gilding letters on City Arms, ...	1	12	9
John Smith, Architect, further to Account,	100	0	0
Expense of Chaises at opening of Bridge,	6	17	0

PAYMENTS IN YEAR ENDING 15TH OCTOBER, 1843—

Messrs. MacDonald & Leslie, further to Account for Contract and Extra Work,	£650	0	0
John Smith, Architect, to Account, ...	100	0	0
Barry, Henry & Co., Iron Railing, per Estimate, ...	88	15	2
William Minto, damage to Ferry Boat when Bridge was shut up, ...	3	18	0
George Mitchell, Painter, for painting railings at areas of Bridge, ...	4	17	11

PAYMENTS IN YEAR ENDING 15TH OCTOBER, 1844—

Messrs. MacDonald & Leslie, further to Account for Contract and Extra Work,	£500	0	0
John Smith, Architect, balance of Account for Plans, Specifications, and General Superintendence of Bridge, ...	60	0	0
Benjamin Reid & Co., for young trees planted near the Bridge, ...	0	16	

PAYMENTS IN YEAR ENDING 15TH OCTOBER, 1845—

Messrs. MacDonald & Leslie, in full of Contract Price and Extra Work, ...	£7000	0	0
Messrs. MacDonald & Leslie, for rebuilding east Parapet,	250	0	0

Contract Price, making South Approach, ...	£140	0	0			
Extra work for Foundations, etc., ...	677	5	8			
Allowance for Puddling Roadway, ...	20	0	0			
Retained till completion of Contract, ...	38	9	8			
	£8125	15	4			
Deduct paid per progressive orders of Architect, ...	7986	5	0			
				£139	10	4
Messrs. MacDonald & Leslie, for keeping Roadway of Bridge in Repair, 1842-3,				5	2	6
Alex. Douglas, one year's allowance in lieu of rent of House taken down to improve the South access, ...				4	0	0
John Duncan, for carting 40 loads of stones for metal to Bridge, ...				1	3	4

These payments, with a few minor items omitted, amounted to £8936 12s. 6d., the total cost of the widening operations. The gross amount of the Bridge of Dee Fund to-day stands at £3926 6*s.* 4*d.*, but there is still borrowed money to be paid off to the amount of £2355 4*s.* 3*d.*, so that the net capital at the present date is only £1571 2*s.* 1*d.* Fortunately, the Fund is being nursed by the authorities. All repairs to the bridge—over £40 last year, £50 five years ago, and nearly £200 seven years ago—have been put against the ordinary Roads account, so that the

South-East Abutment

Showing old roadway level,
with ancient buttresses.
Photo by R. GLEDSON.

Bridge of Dee Fund will doubtless have recovered considerably before the next large reparation works fall to be undertaken.

Before the workmen had well gathered up their tools from the widening of 1842, a question arose over the lowness of the parapets. The average height was two feet ten, and several accidents that happened soon after the bridge was widened raised the cry that the parapets were dangerously low and public safety was in danger. John Smith, the City Architect, was requested to report as to whether the parapet walls ought to be heightened. He admitted, in his report, that the parapets were lower than usual, but he urged that to heighten the walls would materially injure the appearance of the bridge. James Walker of London had expressed a strong opinion against altering the external form of the bridge in any respect; and when, subsequently, James Giles, the artist, and certain others whose opinion in a matter of taste carried weight were consulted they were all against interference with the parapets in any shape or form. Accordingly, although by a small majority, the Town Council resolved, 13th September, 1847, to leave the parapets alone. A slight element of danger from the lowness of the parapets cannot be denied, and indeed, once or twice in the last half-century an accident that might not otherwise have occurred

has been reported, but through all these intervening years no further suggestion has been made, we think, to interfere with this graceful and characteristic feature of the bridge.

CHAPTER VIII

The Coats of Arms and Inscriptions—Unique Example of the Arms of Scotland—A much mis-copied Inscription—Provost Blaikie's Arms—Features of the Aberdeen Arms—Tablets of the reparation works—Elphinstone and Gavin Dunbar.

WE come now to the coats of arms and inscriptions on the Bridge of Dee, a feature that distinguishes it from all other historic bridges in the country. It is hardly to be believed that these sculptures are to be described now, as a whole, for the first time, and it is fortunate that it is possible to deal with them while the details of each are still fairly easily distinguishable. In discussing these coats of arms and inscriptions we shall reckon the piers and arches as from the north end, but we shall begin our description from the south end, where the construction works evidently began. And we shall take first the sculptures along the west side of the bridge.

The two oldest coats of arms are on the round pillar or turret at the south-west corner of the bridge. This pillar, as mentioned below, was

heightened by three courses of masonry—easily to be distinguished from the original smaller courses—when the roadway and parapet at the ends of the bridge were heightened in connection with the widening operations of 1841-2. No change seems to have been made, however, in the position of the two coats of arms.

1. On round pillar, as above, south-west corner, and facing westward—

Coat of Arms: Bishop Gavin Dunbar.

[Three cushions within a double (royal) tressure. Above the shield a mitre, having on either side, top corners, the initials G. D. in raised Gothic capitals; under the shield a scroll or band for motto, but the last weathered out]. This early and plain coat of arms is not—as in most of the examples—sculptured within a panel, but stands out in relief from the sandstone block. Like all the coats of arms on the bridge, with one exception, it is devoid of any indication of colour or metals. Originally, the tinctures were depicted by painting, or illuminating, the stone work, the method of expressing these by lines and marks not having been in use for many years after the Bridge of Dee was built. The details in this coat of arms—which has been sheltered to a considerable extent by its position—are fairly clear. The mitre shows the usual pattern

of Dunbar's mitre, but unlike other examples to be seen it has no fibulae or ribbons.*

2. On round pillar, as above, below No. 1.—

Coat of Arms: Scotland.

[On a plain shield a lion rampant, the shield surmounted by a crown]. This is an extremely interesting example. Like No. 1 it stands out free on the block, and like it too it is carved in the same colour and quality of sandstone, a yellowish grey stone, as that of the bridge. Nearly all the other coats of arms are cut in red sandstone. The special feature of this coat of arms is the absence of the double tressure on the shield. In this respect it seems to be unique. The curious Act of the Scots Parliament, James III., 1471, decreeing that in future there should be no tressure about the lion in the national arms, was not obeyed. Sir James Balfour Paul, the present Lyon King, says of it—"Like many other Acts, it never seems to have been carried into effect; at least I am not aware of even a solitary instance of the Scottish arms without the tressure either at or after this period."†

*For full blazon of the bishop's arms see Sir James Balfour Paul's Ordinary of Scottish Arms, Heraldic Ceiling of St. Machar, Reg. Epis. Aberd., Vol. I., frontispiece, etc.

†Heraldry in relation to Scottish History and Art, p. 523.

This coat of arms on the Bridge of Dee, *circa* 1520, is a very clear and interesting example.

3. On south spandril of seventh arch, near the round pillar above-mentioned, within a square panel, moulded frame—

Coat of Arms : Bishop William Elphinstone

[A chevron humetty between three boars' heads erased. Above the shield a mitre, having at either side of it, top corners, the initials V. E. in raised Roman capitals ; under the shield a band or scroll with the motto NON CONFUNDAR].* This is a very curious coat of arms. For some reason it has the chevron represented "humetty," the ends cut off, instead of extending, as they ought, to the edge of the shield. Then it is quite clearly much later in date than Nos. 1 and 2 already described. The decorative pattern (even the fringes) of the mitre are remarkably clear ; so also the motto, cut in incised letters, with three double letters ligatured to bring the long motto into the available space, is quite fresh and distinct. Further, it is in quite an exceptional position. It is the only piece of sculpture on the main wall of the bridge. The explanation seems to be that this is the Elphinstone coat of arms ordered to be cut and put on the port of the bridge in 1679 (see p. 57), and placed in its

*See note to No. 1., p. 109.

present position, under where the port stood, when the port was demolished in 1774.

4. On sixth pier, s. w. face, a date block, with raised characters—

1520

This is a valuable and significant block, the oldest date on the bridge, which shows that the bridge was begun not later than 1520. The block had borne the usual ANO DOM, but the words are quite weathered out. Fortunately, the date has been more under the shelter of the parapet, and on that account has been preserved.

5. Sixth pier, s. w. face, immediately under No. 4, in a square sunk panel, moulded frame—

Coat of Arms: Gavin Dunbar

[Three cushions within a double tressure. Above the shield a mitre; under the shield a band with motto, in raised Gothic Capitals, SUB SPE]. In this case the usual initials are awanting. The sculpture generally is so sharp and clear as to suggest that it has been re-cut, perhaps at the widening in 1842. The motto ("In hope") is shown in these Gothic characters only in this example and in No. 21, the fine coat of arms on the buttress at the north-east corner.

6. Fifth pier, s. w. face, a date block with raised characters—

ANO DOM 1525

[The progression of dates would indicate that the bridge was begun at the south end, then the north end was built, and the structure was completed in the middle].

7. Fifth pier, s. w. face, immediately under No. 6, and standing free on the sandstone block—

Coat of Arms: Gavin Dunbar

[Three cushions on a plain shield. Above the shield mitre with initials G. D. in Gothic capitals, upper top corners as before; under the shield a band for motto, but no letters distinguishable]. A plain and weather-worn piece of sculpture, evidently in its original state. It lacks particularly the tressure from the shield and the fringed ribbons from the mitre.

8. Fourth pier, s. w. face, an oblong sandstone tablet, inserted within a deep moulded sandstone frame of separate blocks of masonry. The tablet has an inscription in raised Gothic lower-case letters, as follows—

GAVIN S. · DUBAR · ABERDONEN
EPS · IPERII · JACOBI · 5TI SCOTORU
REGIS · ANO · DUO · ME · LAPSU
REEDIFICARE · FECIT · ORATE · P · EO

This has been an extremely puzzling inscription for many years. The numeral after the name of King James has crumbled off, but the mark where it stood is clear in certain lights. But the ANO DUO has been much miscopied, and different versions of the inscription are found accordingly. Andrew Jervise (in "Epitaphs and Inscriptions," II., 284) copied it as ANO DNI, for Anno Domini, but as no date applied, he concluded, apparently, that the date had been somehow omitted. And other writers accepted his rendering.* Still earlier than Jervise, a writer in the *Aberdeen Observer* (perhaps Joseph Robertson), whose short article is reproduced in a rare volume of "Topographical Sketches" (no date), copied the phrase as Anno Octavo and rendered it "in the eighth year of the reign of James V." But in a good light, and examined with a glass, the phrase is perfectly clear as ANO

*Jervise miscopied also the contracted word "iperii" as "opera" which involved a serious mis-statement in the translation.

DUO, and the inscription (although it really will not render) seems to read—

> Gavin Dunbar, Bishop of Aberdeen, in the reign of James V., King of the Scots, made me, having fallen down for two years, to be rebuilt. Pray for him.*

But the wrong transliteration by Jervise and others is only one thing. The main difficulty with the inscription is that it is wrong in its facts. Gavin Dunbar did not rebuild the bridge. He built it—as is correctly stated in the next inscription but one. Further, the inscription (although the individual raised letters are beginning to loosen and crumble off), is far too fresh and sharp to have faced the weather for four hundred years. There can be no reasonable doubt that this is not the original inscription block, but a later one inserted in place of the original tablet on which the inscription had doubtless become much decayed, and had been inaccurately copied.

It is to be noted that both the upper and lower moulded stones of the "frame" of this inscription are restorations. The lower stone is the older, and has space for a date (as in No. 12), but the date had not been reproduced. The upper stone of the

*After the above was written, and while this particular pier was undergoing repair, an opportunity was kindly afforded by the Burgh Surveyor of taking a rubbing of the inscription. It came out quite clearly as given above.

frame is newer and of a different colour of stone from the lower. It seems to be of the same date and quality as the inscription block itself, which, in that case, would be three removes at least from the original sculpture.

9. Fourth pier, s. w. face, immediately under No. 8.—

Coat of Arms: Gavin Dunbar

[On a shield three cushions. Above the shield a mitre, having on either side as before, the initials G. D. in raised Gothic capitals; under the shield a scroll or band, for motto, but no letters distinguishable]. Here there is no panel—the composition is cut in relief on the sandstone block. The shield has no tressure, and the mitre has no ribbons. The fold of the scroll is different from No. 7 (which runs plain across, with both ends doubled up behind), but is the same as No. 5, having one end doubled up in front, and one behind.

10. Fourth pier, n. w. face, large square panel, with inscription tablet of slate sunk within a deep frame or border of moulded sandstone masonry. The inscription, in fine Roman capitals, deeply incised, is as follows—

SENATUS ABREDONENSIS, QUI, PER INTEGRUM ADMINISTRATIONIS CURRICULUM, NE QUID INCURIA SUA RESPUBLICA DETRIMENTI CAPERET, SUMMA OPE NITEBATUR, OMNES ARCUS HUIUSCE PONTIS, IAM COLLABASCENTES, EX ÆRE AD PONTEM SARTUM TECTUMQUE CONSERVANDUM DEDICATO INSTAURANDOS CURABAT ANNIS DOMINI 1719, 1720, 1721, 1722 ET 1723.

[The Town Council of Aberdeen, who, during the whole period of their tenure of office, exerted their utmost efforts to prevent the public interests from sustaining any injury through their negligence, caused in the years 1719-20-21-22 and 23, the whole of the arches of this bridge, which had fallen into a state of decay, to be rebuilt out of moneys set apart for keeping the bridge in repair—Jervise, Epitaphs and Inscriptions, II., 284].

11. Third pier, s.w. face, an oblong sandstone tablet inserted within a deep moulded sandstone frame of separate blocks of masonry. The tablet —like No. 8.— has an inscription in raised Gothic lower-case letters, as follows—

GAUIN$^{S}_{..}$ · DUBAR · ABERDONEN
POTIFEX · ME · TRAS · DEE · FLUUIU · FIERI
IUSSIT · ANNO · DNI · QUITO · ET · VIGESIO
SUP$^{A}_{..}$ · MILLE$^{M}_{..}$ · ET · QUIGE$^{M}_{..}$ · ORATE · P · EO

[Gavin Dunbar, Bishop of Aberdeen, caused me to be built across the river Dee, A.D. 1525. Pray for him]. In this inscription the first two letters in the name of the river are ligatured, and contraction marks are carefully inserted above the "u" in Dunbar, the "o" in pontifex, and the "a" in trans. Like No. 8, it is evidently not an original block, the raised characters being sharp and fine, and even the pointing of the tablet (with some fine substance like putty) is particularly complete and neat. (This, however, may be recent). The tablet seems to belong to the same date as No. 8—indeed, it is in every respect similar to it in quality and workmanship. The original inscription in this case, however, must have been in better preservation than that worked upon for No. 8.

12. Third pier, s.w. face, immediately under No. 11, and forming the lower block of the frame of the same, a date block—

ANO DOM 1525

This is evidently an original block and the extent of the weathering of the raised characters, almost to obliteration, may be contrasted with the marked freshness and clearness of the inscription in the tablet itself.

13. Third pier, s.w. face, immediately below No. 12, within a square splayed frame or border—

Coat of Arms: Gavin Dunbar

[Three cushions within a double tressure. Above the shield a mitre—no ribbons; beneath the shield a band, or scroll, for motto, but no letters distinguishable]. This coat of arms (like No. 5), is so remarkably sharp and clear as to suggest that it has been either re-cut or is an entire renewal. The usual initials are awanting.

14. Second pier, s.w. face, a fine square sandstone panel within a moulded sandstone border or frame—

Coat of Arms: Provost Thomas Blaikie

[Argent, on a fess azure three crescents or in chief two wolves' heads erased gules. Above the shield an esquire's helmet, with ornate (foliage) mantlings; the helmet surmounted by a crest, a wolf's head erased proper. Beneath the shield a band or scroll bearing the motto, *Virtute et Fidelitate*. In the upper two corners of the panel are the initials, in raised Roman letters, T. B., for Thomas Blaikie, and in the base of the panel similarly the letter P. for Provost]. This is a finely-cut piece of sculpture, the only coat of arms on the bridge on which the tinctures are expressed by lines and

marks on the stonework. Thomas Blaikie was Provost from 1839 to 1846, and in his period of office the bridge was widened in 1841-2. This coat of arms was inserted at that date. Provost Blaikie was knighted in 1856, and a knight's helmet takes the place of the esquire's above his arms in the Town Hall.

15. Second pier, n.w. face, within a plain deeply splayed panel, in soft yellow sandstone—

Coat of Arms: Aberdeen

[Three towers triple-towered within a (single) tressure flory counter-flory; having as supporters two leopards rampant; above the shield on a scroll the motto Bon-Accord].* This coat of arms is exceptional in being cut in high relief, and on this account it has suffered much damage. It is obviously much later in date than the bridge. There can be little doubt, indeed, that it is the identical arms of Aberdeen ordered to be cut and placed on the port of the bridge in 1679. (See p. 56), and placed in the pier of the bridge when the port was taken down in 1774.

This piece of sculpture is interesting, even in its errors. The main defect in the shield is in the

*The correct blazon of the city arms would be Gules, three towers triple-towered argent within a double tressure flory counter-flory of the same; having as supporters two leopards (rampant) proper.

single, instead of the double (royal) tressure, the badge of royal favour which the town of Aberdeen, with Perth, the ancient capital, enjoys. Then it seems to have fourteen lilies instead of eight blossoming from either side of the tressure alternately, and in this—as well as in some other respects—the arms resemble the drawing of the Aberdeen arms issued by the Lyon Office in 1674, from which, probably, this coat of arms was executed.* One curious difference from the drawing of 1674 is seen in the position of the heads of the leopard supporters. In the drawing the head of the right-hand leopard is full-face, and the left is in profile ; in this coat of arms it is the other way about. In both cases, as used to be seen invariably, the leopards' tails hang down between their hind legs. Now, since the certification by the Lyon King in 1883, the tails of the Aberdeen leopards wave proudly in the air after the proper manner of rampant beasts. At one time, as already mentioned, this coat of arms was painted in its proper colours. The motto was painted and gilded when the bridge was widened in 1842. It is not stated definitely whether the whole composition was painted then, but as examined through a glass

*The Aberdeen coat of arms on the Market Cross (1686), seems also to have been cut from that drawing. It has a single tressure filled with lilies as thick as they can stand, 16 in all. Its towers are castles, and its leopards are very strange beasts.

The Oldest Coats of Arms

S.W. corner pillar. The oldest part of the Bridge. (1) Arms of Gavin Dunbar. (2) Arms of Scotland — devoid of tressure on shield; unique example. *Photo by* R. GIBBON.

the stonework seems still to bear marked traces of having been painted at some not very remote time.

16. Second pier, n. w. face, immediately below No. 15, in large sunk panel, inscription tablet of slate within a moulded border or frame of sandstone masonry. The inscripton of incised characters relates to the widening of the bridge in 1842, and was composed by James Melvin, the noted rector of the Grammar School. It runs as follows—

ANNVENTE SVMMO NVMINE
HICCE PONS
EX BENE ADMINISTRATA PECVNIA AD EVM
CONSERVANDUM LEGATA
TRECENTIS AMPLIVS ANNIS POSTQVAM
PRIMVM EST EXTRVCTVS
MVLTVM DILATATVS PENITVSQVE
REFECTVS EST
ANNO M. D.CCC. XXXXI ET M. D. XXXXII.
THOMA BLAIKIE CIVITATIS ABERDONENSIS
PRAEFECTO.
GEORGO HENRY } OPERVM PVBLICORVM
GVLIELMO FRASER } DEINCEPS CVRATORIBUS
IOANNE SMITH, ARCHITECTO
ALEXANDRO MACDONALD } REDEMPTORIBVS
GVLIELMO LESLIE }

[By the favour of Divine Providence, this Bridge, upwards of Three Centuries from the date of its original erection, was greatly widened and

thoroughly repaired out of its well-administered funds, in the years 1841-2 : Thomas Blaikie, Provost of Aberdeen ; George Henry, William Fraser, successively Masters of Bridge Works ; John Smith, Architect ; Alexander Macdonald, William Leslie, Contractors.—Rendering, doubtless by James Melvin, *Aberdeen Journal*, 5th October, 1842]. There is one very noticeable feature of this panel, namely, that although the slate tablet bearing the inscription dates only from 1842, the moulded sandstone border or frame is ancient. Clearly the inscription tablet occupies the place of an older one left out after the widening operations. It is to be noted, too, that parts of this inscription are already so much weathered as to be quite unreadable, contrasting, in this respect, very unfavourably with the inscription (No. 10), more than a century older, which tells of the operations of 1719-23. The reason is that the older inscription is cut in a deep V-shaped letter, sloping to the bottom, whereas this inscription of 1842, probably for the sake of immediate effect, is cut in a shallow, flat-bottomed letter, which some day soon will have to be re-cut in the V form if the inscription is to be preserved.

The names on the tablet mostly speak for themselves. George Henry was Master of Kirk and Bridge Works, 1838 to 1841 ; he afterwards

became a Baillie, and was Lord Provost from November, 1850, to November, 1853. He is remembered now only by the name of Henry Street, which was opened during his period of office, and was named after him. He was a partner in the firm of Hugh Gordon & Co., copper-smiths, Gallowgate. William Fraser, whose name is conjoined with Henry's on the tablet, was Master of Kirk and Bridge Works, 1841-2. His name was not William, but Thomas Fraser, but for a curious personal reason he allowed his name to be set down as William Fraser, not only on the Bridge of Dee tablet, but in the Town Council records as well. He was manager to Provost Henry of the Copper Company, and resided in the "Copper Company's Court," Gallowatge.

17. First pier, n. w. face, in a fine perpendicular sandstone panel—

Coat of Arms: Gavin Dunbar

[Three cushions within a double tressure flory counter-flory. Above the shield a mitre, flanked in upper corners by the initials G. D. in raised capitals; under the shield a band or scroll for motto, but no letters distinguishable]. This coat

of arms, well seen from the roadway of the bridge and from the north bank of the river, has been one of the finest and most prominent coats of arms on the bridge. It is very greatly weathered, but its beauty is still evident. The shield carries the double (royal) tressure, and alone among the Dunbar arms on the west side of the bridge, it is flory counter-flory (of nine lilies). The sandstone frame of the panel is unique in having the deep moulding ornamented with a series of daintily carved bosses, or rosettes. The upper and lower pieces of the frame are restorations, but the rosettes have been reproduced with great care. As in one other case (No. 26), the coat of arms is surmounted by a projecting little canopy to protect it from the drip.

18. First pier, n. w. face (considerably below No. 17 which stands alone), a date block—

ANO DNI 1523

As mentioned under No. 6, this date indicates that the northern end of the bridge was begun after the south end, and that the bridge was completed in the middle.

19. First pier, n. w. face, immediately under the date block No. 18 (and with No. 24 the lowest arms on the bridge)—

Coat of Arms: Scotland

[A lion rampant within a double tressure flory counter-flory; the shield surmounted by a crown]. This piece of sculpture, cut in fine yellow sandstone, is executed in relief and stands out clear from the surface. It will be noticed that here, as on the pillar at the south end, the arms of Dunbar and of Scotland close the series, Dunbar's, in each case, occupying the more honourable position. Why, at the north end, these arms should be on the pier and not on the pillar, as at the south end, is one of the inexplicable little problems of the structure.

CHAPTER IX

Coats of Arms, *continued*—King James's Arms and early Unicorns—The Regent Albany—A fine Elphinstone example—Dunbar's Arms as reflecting his character—Defects in dimensions of the Bridge—Ancient "crow-steps" in the Parapet—Remains of old road levels—The old Sun-dial.

WE turn now to the east side of the bridge where the sculptures are much fewer in number than on the west side. Two of the most interesting coats of arms on the structure are on a buttress at the north-east corner (about where the pre-Reformation Chapel stood), but are scarcely to be approached for the squalid and unworthy condition of the ground near by, and the wretched hoarding which seems to belong to the salmon fishery hut.

20. North end of bridge, on buttress of abutment nearest the river, in a perpendicular panel—

Coat of Arms: James V.

[On a small shield a lion rampant within a double tressure flory counter-flory. Above the shield a royal helmet with foliage mantlings; under

the shield a scroll or band with the words I. REX. As supporters, two tall unicorns erect, each gorged (or collared) with open crown from which a chain depends over the left shoulder reflexed round the back and right thigh to the ground]. A beautiful and very interesting coat of arms. Unfortunately, it is damaged, the upper right-hand corner having been chipped off carrying away the dexter supporter's head and most of the royal helmet, so that it is impossible to say what the crest had been. The unicorns as supporters are notable. Mary, Queen of Scots, was for long supposed to have been the first to use unicorns as supporters in the royal coat of arms. James I. and his immediate successors used two lions rampant for this heraldic purpose, and the only exception so far noted was the example discovered on a stone in Melrose Abbey with unicorns, of date 1505.* Here is a beautiful example, however, on the Bridge of Dee, *c.* 1525, where the two unicorns are well marked, with their chains depending on the ground as in the manner of the lion supporters of the Stuart Kings.†

*Sir James Balfour Paul, Heraldry in relation to Scottish History and Art, p. 58.

†A still earlier example occurs in a coat of arms of James IV., 1504, in a buttress of King's College, where the supporters are two unicorns. It is reproduced in Cruickshank's Armorial Ensigns, opposite p. 41.

21. On buttress of abutment as above, immediately below No. 20—

Coat of Arms: Gavin Dunbar

[Three cushions within a double tressure flory counter-flory. Above the shield a mitre with the initials G. D. in Roman block capitals in the upper corners as before; under the shield a band with motto SUB SPE in raised capitals]. As with No. 20, this coat of arms is inserted into a plain recess in the face of the buttress. It is the most complete example of Dunbar's arms on the bridge, for although No. 17 is in some respects more decorative, we have in this example all the heraldic features of No. 17 with, in addition, the details of the mitre and the motto, easily to be read.

22. In parapet over the middle of the first arch, a sunk oblong panel, granite, 24 inches by 18, with deep incised lettering—

INSTAURATUS
A. D.
1720

[Restored A. D. 1720]. We are now among the inscription blocks placed on the bridge in the course of the operations of 1719-1723. This first arch

was evidently completed before the others, as see the date blocks that follow.

23. First pier, n. e. face—

Coat of Arms: Duke of Albany, Regent

[Quarterly: 1st, lion rampant within a double tressure, Scotland; 2nd, lion rampant within a bordure, March; 3rd, three human legs conjoined in the centre at the upper part of the thighs flexed in triangle armed, Man; 4th, a saltire and chief, Annandale]. Albany was regent from 1515 to 1524, and it would be noted that the date 1523 is on the other end of this pier (No. 18), so that the arms would be put up shortly before Albany left Scotland. Gavin Dunbar would be willing to honour Albany in this way, for it was for adherence to Albany that he was imprisoned by the Queen Mother for some months in 1524. One curious feature of this coat of arms is to be remarked. Above the shield is a projecting piece of the sandstone block of the shape of a crown or coronet, but without sculpture, and rough. It seems as if it had been intended to carve a coronet above the shield (as in the example of Albany's arms in the ceiling of St. Machar, then newly completed), but the work had never been finished. Any carving actually executed could

not have weathered out, the arms are otherwise so clear and complete. There is no panel in this case, the sculpture standing out in relief from the surface of the pier.

24. First pier, n. e. face, considerably below No. 23 (and on same level as No. 19), fine large perpendicular sandstone panel, in moulded frame—

Coat of Arms: William Elphinstone

[A chevron between three boars' heads erased. Above the shield a mitre, having on either side, in upper corners, the initials V. E. in raised Scottish capitals; under the shield a band or scroll with motto in raised characters NON CONFUNDAR]. This is a specially fine piece of sculpture, and is probably the "large arms of Elphinstone" which the Council paid for illuminating in 1722. The cutting is distinctive, and superior to much of the work on these armorial bearings.

25. In parapet, over the top of the second arch, sunk oblong granite panel, 20 inches by 16, incised lettering—

A. D.
1721

26. Second pier, front, in square panel, splayed border—

Coat of Arms: Gavin Dunbar

[Three cushions within a double tressure, flory counter-flory. Above the shield a mitre, with initials G. D. in upper corners of panel; beneath the shield a band for motto]. In this example the arms and splayed border of panel are all worked on the same block of red sandstone. The work is so clear and well-preserved as again to suggest that it has been re-carved. This is the only piece of sculpture on the front of a pier. Here also we have a projecting little canopy above the coat of arms as in the case of No. 17.

27. In parapet, over the middle of third arch, a sunk oblong granite panel, 21 inches by 16, incised lettering, a date block—

ANNO DOM
1721

28. In parapet, over middle of fourth arch, sunk oblong granite panel, 20 inches by 16, deep incised lettering—

A. D.
1722

This completes the remarkable series of sculptures on the bridge. In their character and distribution they raise interesting points, and particularly they have some bearing on the personality of Gavin Dunbar, who constructed the bridge. There are sixteen coats of arms, four inscription tablets, and eight date blocks—twenty-eight sculptures in all. Of the coats of arms two, at least, are later than the erection of the bridge, and of the other fourteen, eight are the arms of Gavin Dunbar. Then of the four inscription blocks, two are recent, and the other two are both in commendation of Gavin Dunbar. It must be confessed that the character of Dunbar, as reflected in these constructions, is not quite in accordance with the traditional view. We know that he appealed for state help in crushing the heresy of the Lutherans in Aberdeen, and it is on record that he took offence in connection with the completion of King's College on being denied the opportunity of making a large display of personal memorials on that building. It seems impossible to escape the conclusion that he was both a querulous and a vain man. Elphinstone is paid the meagre compliment of one original commemorative piece of sculpture. There may possibly have been another. One would like to think that the tablet, removed from the frame which now encloses the inscription tablet of 1842, was a tribute by Dunbar to

Elphinstone, who was the real founder of the bridge, a fact that would not be suspected otherwise from the existing memorials on the structure.

Before we finally leave the Bridge of Dee, we must note some curiosities of its dimensions. It is a "level" bridge only in a relative sense. If we measure from a horizontal line running along the spring of the arches to the top of any of the arches we find that no two arches are the same height; or, if we measure from the spring line to the top of the parapet we get a similarly curious result. Thus, from the spring line to the top of the first arch is 18 ft. 8 inches; the second arch, 18 ft. 5; the third arch, 17 ft. 9; fourth arch, 18 ft. $4\frac{1}{2}$; fifth arch, 18 ft. $1\frac{3}{4}$; sixth arch, 17 ft. 11; and seventh arch, 17 ft. 8. Or, if we take arch height and parapet together, we find at the first arch the total height is 26 ft. $6\frac{3}{4}$; the second arch 25 ft. 3; third arch, 25 ft. 4; fourth arch, 25 ft. $6\frac{1}{2}$; fifth arch, 26 ft. $5\frac{3}{4}$; sixth arch, 26 ft. 4; and the seventh arch, 25 ft. $3\frac{3}{4}$.*

Take it another way. Looking along the bridge anyone can see that the tops of the arches are not in line. William Kennedy of "The Annals" remarked on that nearly a century ago.

*Measurements taken from the working plans of John Smith, City Architect, used for the widening in 1842—John's Smith's figures.

But it is curious to find that in the matter of width no two of the arches are alike. Arch No. 1 measures 45 ft. 10 wide; No. 2, 45 ft. 8½; No. 3, 45 ft. 1½; No. 4, 45 ft. 3; No. 5, 45 ft. 6; No. 6, 44 ft. 5; and No. 7, 44 ft. 7½. It is to be remarked that the highest arch, No. 1, is also the widest, but there is no scientific relation in the dimensions, because the lowest arch, No. 7, is not the narrowest—it is No. 6.

One more point we may note is the thickness of the piers between the arches. Again we have no similarity. Pier No. 1, between the first and second arches, is 14 ft. 3½ thick; Pier No. 2, is 14 ft. 8¼; No. 3, 13 ft. 11½; No. 4, 13 ft. 7¾; No. 5, 13 ft. 10; and No. 6, 14 ft. 4½.

All these differences are rather amazing at first sight, and with our measure of reverence for the ancient builders we are tempted to ascribe the differences to some subtle intention of craftsmanship, or at least to some quality of character which enabled these men to attain their end in larger freedom than we should allow ourselves in such works nowadays. Probably the differences are due to neither the one nor the other, but merely to defective methods and appliances in setting-out and in construction. We may take it that the differences are not intentional. Alexander Galloway and his sixteenth-century craftsmen did their

best, no doubt, to make the bridge symmetrical as well as strong and useful and agreeable to look upon.

Then a word on one or two remoter points connected with the bridge as we see it to-day. Prior to the widening of 1841-2, the ends of the bridge had rather more character than they have now. It will be seen by reference to George Smith's drawing of the bridge in 1822 that the parapet at each end dropped by "crow-steps" to follow the descending roadway, and that the string course similarly descended by steps to the terminal round pillar. Further, the round pillar itself, at each of the four corners, rose only to the height of the parapet at its termination then. The apex, surmounted by its ball finial, rose, accordingly, only slightly higher than the general line of the parapet. When the bridge was widened, however, and the level of the approaches raised, it became necessary to raise this descending portion of the parapet. Accordingly, the crow-stepping in both parapet and string-course disappeared; the parapet and string-course were both carried straight out on the level to the terminal pillar, and each pillar was heightened by three courses of masonry—which can easily be distinguished from the original work—so that the apex should still rise clear above the new parapet line as we see it to-day.

The evidence of the higher level of the approach roadway is especially clear at the south end of the bridge. If one will venture through the squalid conditions at the south-east corner and descend to the river bank, one can easily trace with the eye the line of the old roadway, supported by the old buttresses of the sixteenth century. Or, if the visitor will descend the steps at the south-west corner, he will find himself in the old roadway, that turned sharply westward round where the old sun-dial is now, and he can look back on what is really an embankment carrying the present approach, supported on a dressed ashlar wall and protected by the slim iron railings that Barry Henry's people erected there as the last works in the widening of 1842.

Mention has just been made of the old sun-dial near the steps, at the south-west corner of the bridge. It naturally excites curiosity. It consists of a flat slab of free-stone, duly oriented, and along the south edge run the letters, roughly incised—

A W MR O B W 1719

This obviously stands for—"Alexander Watson, Master of Bridge Works, 1719." Alexander Watson was elected Master of Kirk and Bridge Works on 24th September, 1718, and continued in

office for a year. He was doubtless the Alexander Watson, merchant, who married a daughter of Provost Cruickshank of Banchory, whose curious experiences in connection with the building of the existing bridge over the Ruthrieston Burn in 1693-4 we have already recorded. He was Master of Bridge Works when the large reparation works in connection with the Bridge of Dee were begun in 1719, and the sun-dial was constructed then, Watson's name being associated with it evidently as a memorial of the occasion. The sun-dial has long been useless for the iron gnomon has disappeared—broken off probably long before 1842 when the dial was placed where it is now on the top of one of the new buttresses of that date. It was the last act in the latest structural works of consequence in connection with the ancient bridge.

And so we take leave of the Bridge of Dee and its builders. The chief merit of the structure for us is that it comes down to us compassed about by four hundred years of vivid historical and personal associations. It is not a dead "antiquity," preserved apart as a relic that its interests may not be entirely lost. We have it standing in its original character, on its own proper site, fulfilling its original purpose as fully and admirably to-day as when handed over to our forefathers ten generations ago.

Its historical record is complete, and so its educational value is very high for Aberdeen. One hopes to see it, then, not merely well cared for, which is due, but, with others of our ancient historical possessions in this part of the country, utilised more and more in giving inspiration to the young people of the community for many generations to come.

INDEX

INDEX

Abercrombie, Charles, Surveyor, Edinburgh, his work in planning roads at Aberdeen, 88; his plan of the highway to Stonehaven, 93; his scheme of an approach from the Bridge of Dee to Aberdeen, 91-2.

Aberdeen Arms carved on the Bridge of Dee port, and illuminated, 1679, 56; the Aberdeen coat of arms one of the problems of the Bridge, 57; present position of the coat of arms, 119.

Aberdeen Journal, 1887, quoted, 35.

Albany, Duke of, Regent, his coat of arms on the Bridge, 129.

Anderson, P. J., his *Charters and Other Writs* quoted, 26, 77, 81, 82.

Architects from Dundee and Edinburgh consulted as to reparation works, 1717, 62.

Ardlar, Lands of, granted as an endowment of the Bridge, 23; afterwards disposed of, 24 *n.*

Battles at the Bridge of Dee, 47 *et seq.*

Bishops of Aberdeen and their unfriendly relations with the town, 7 *et seq.*

Blaikie, Provost Thomas, his arms on the Bridge, 118.

Blakhal's *Breiffe Narration* quoted, 35.

Boece's *Lives of the Bishops* quoted, 11, 15, 16, 17.

Bonny John Seton killed at the Battle of the Bridge, 53.

Bridge of Balgownie, its unique design and endowment, 1.

Bridge of Dee, preparations for building, 11; how distinguished from other historic bridges in Scotland, 20; the Bridge completed, 21; offered to the town, 22 *et seq.*; first intimation of its use, 28; officials appointed to the charge of it, 29; two problems of the structure, 57-8; the reparation works of 18th century, 58 *et seq.*; the widening scheme of 19th century, 93 *et seq.*; curiously unsymmetrical in its dimensions, 133-4; discussion over the lowness of the parapets, 105-6; its inscriptions and coats of arms, 107 *et seq.*

Bridge of Dee funds curiously applied, 41-2; present position of the funds, 104.
Bridge of Dee Road to Stonehaven, its history and use, 76 *et seq.*; its maintenance by the Town Council, 80 *et seq.*; the road from the Bridge to the Town, 90-1.
Bridge over the Dee at Craiglug projected, 1459, 6.
Bridges, early, over the Dee, 2.
Bridges in East of Scotland in 13th century, 4.
Burns, Robert, his journey by the Bridge of Dee Road, 86.

Causey Mounth, *see* Bridge of Dee Road.
Causey Port constructed on Stonehaven Road by the Town Council, 82; its precise situation, 82-3.
Chapel at Bridge of Dee, 31 *et seq.*
Chartulary of St. Nicholas quoted, 9.
Child, Professor, his *Ballads of Scotland* quoted, 54.
Crab, John, and an early Bridge of Dee, 4; his endowment of the Bridge of Dee road, 78.
Cromwell, Oliver, and the Bridge of Dee Chapel, 36.
Cruickshank, John, his *Armorial Ensigns of Aberdeen* quoted, 127 *n.*

Date blocks on the Bridge of Dee, 111 *et seq.*
Dunbar, Bishop Gavin, his intention in providing the Bridge of Dee, 11; his accession welcomed in Old Aberdeen, 16; appeals for state help in stamping out the Lutheran doctrines, 33; his coats of arms on the Bridge, 108, 111, 112, 115, 118, 123, 128, 131; tablets on the Bridge commemorating his work, 113, 116; his character reflected on the sculptures of the Bridge, 132.
Durris Bridge over the Dee, 3.

Elphinstone, Bishop William, his intention in projecting the Bridge of Dee, 7; his precise share in the provision of the Bridge, 11; his bequest for building it, 15; his coat of arms carved on the Port, and illuminated, 56; afterwards repainted, 71, 130; his coats of arms on the Bridge, 110, 130; the meagreness of the compliment paid him, 132.

Ferries on the Dee in early days, 6.
Flodden, the Battle of, interferes with the building of the Bridge of Dee, 18.
Franche, Thomas, Master Mason at the building of the Bridge, 18; his work on the Bridge, 27; death of his son in Aberdeen, *ibid.*

Galloway, Rev. Alexander, Parson of Kinkell, architectural oversman for Bishops Elphinstone and Dunbar, 17; superintends the building of the Bridge of Dee, 18; delivers the Bridge to the townsfolk, 25; employed by the town to advise on the measures for fortifying Aberdeen, 27.
Gardyne, Alexander, his poem on the Bridge of Dee, 30; his *Theatre of Scottish Worthies* quoted, 31.
Gibbets erected at the Bridge of Dee, 46.
Giles, James, artist, advises as to the parapets of the Bridge, 105.
Gordon, Bishop, abstains from proceeding with the Bridge, 14.
Gordon, of Abergeldie, disputes with the Town Council as to the situation of the Bridge Chapel, 32.
Gough's *Itinerary of King Edward* quoted, 3.
Gregory, Professor, gives advice as to repairing the Bridge, 64.
Guild, Dean of, zealous in the burning of witches, and in repairing the Bridge of Dee, 38.

Henderson, John A., his *History of Banchory Devenick* quoted, 46.
Holburn Street Bridge, over Ruthrieston Burn, erected, 92.
Holburn Street laid out, 92-3.

James V., *King*, his coat of arms on the buttress of the Bridge, 126-7.
Johnson, Samuel, his journey along the Bridge of Dee Road, 86.

Keith, George Skene, his *View of the Agriculture of Aberdeenshire* quoted, 93 *n.*
Kennedy, W., his *Annals of Aberdeen* quoted, 26; he notes the different heights of the arches of the Bridge of Dee, 133.
Kincardine O'Neil, bridge over the Dee there, 3.
Kirk and Bridge Accounts quoted, 61, 67, 102 *et seq.*

Lindsay, William, water overseer, appointed to have charge of the Bridge of Dee, 59; his unfavourabe account of the state of the Bridge, 61; he is dismissed by the Town Council, 62.

Macdonald and Leslie, contractors for the widening of the Bridge of Dee, 101 *et seq.*
Macfarlane's *Geographical Collections* quoted, 83.
Melvin, James, Grammar School, his Latin inscription on the Bridge, 121-2.
Menzies of Pitfodels gives the use of a granite quarry for the repair of the Bridge, 68.
Munro, A. M., his *Provosts and Aldermen of Aberdeen* quoted 90.
Mylne's *Master Masons of Scotland* quoted, 12, 18, 27.

Paul, Sir James Balfour, his *Ordinary of Scottish Arms* quoted, 109; his *Heraldry in Relation to Scottish History and Art* quoted, 109, 127.
Port on the Bridge of Dee constructed, 1545, 36; the Port removed, 1774, 84-5.

Register of Arbroath Abbey quoted, 4.
Register of the Great Seal quoted, 26, 36.
Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis quoted, 3, 5, 26.
Riach, Alexander, Master of Works at reparation of the Bridge of Dee, 1719, 64; pensioned by the Town Council, 73.
Ruthrieston Bridge built, 1693-4, 89-90; the Provost's offence, 90; an example of a Pack-Horse bridge, Introduction.

St. Machar Cathedral, the only granite Cathedral in the country, 19; similarity of material to the Bridge of Dee, *ibid.*
St. Nicholas Church, its relationship to the bishopric and the town, 8.
Scotland, arms of, on the Bridge of Dee, 109, 124-5.
Scott, Sir Walter, his visit by the Bridge of Dee Road, 87.
Simpson, Archibald, architect, his scheme for widening the Bridge, 96-7; payment by the Town Council for his plans, 98 *n.*

Smeaton's scheme for the widening of the Bridge, 93-4.
Smith, John, City Architect, his scheme for widening the Bridge, 95-6; payments to him by the Town Council, 98 *n.*, 102 *et seq.*
Spalding's *Memorials of the Troubles*, quoted, 48 *et seq.*
Statue of the Virgin in the Bridge Chapel, 34; its strange subsequent history, 35 *et seq.*
Sundial at Bridge of Dee described and explained, 136.

Town Council and the maintenance of the Bridge of Dee Road, 80 *et seq.*
Town Council *Register* quoted, 6, 9, 10, 15, 19, 22, 23, 26, 29, 32, 33, 38, 41, 56, 58, 59, 63, 64, 68, 74, 82, 83, 84, 85, 92, 100.
Town Council relations to the Chapel at Bridge of Dee, 33.
Town Council repaint, or illuminate, Bishop Elphinstone's coat of arms on the Bridge, 1722, 130.
Town Council tablet in commemoration of the reparation works, 1719-23, 116; tablet in commemoration of the widening, 1841-2, 121.

View of the Diocese quoted, 55.

Walker, James, C. E., London, suggests the final scheme of widening the Bridge, 98 *et seq.*

Printed by William Smith & Sons, The Bon-Accord Press